

Official Newsletter
of



NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P. O. Box 1361

Altoona, PA 16603-1361

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.

UNDER THE WIRE
by Leonard Alwine
HISTORY OF THE LOGAN VALLEY PICNIC

It amazes me sometimes the items which you can find. Items that you did not know existed or were things that most would have thrown away. Then to find one almost 70 years old that was "like new" is unbelievable when it is a paper product no less.

This past August that is what happened to me. I found a program book for the Logan Valley Picnic held July 22, 1948 in like new condition.

What was even the icing on the cake was the history lesson printed inside the book. (This will be added at the end of this article).

The picnic seemed to be quite an affair for Logan Valley. It was held for two days so all could attend. Remember that Logan Valley employed about 300 people years ago. The program book is like many books today - full of ads from local businesses. There were a total of 88 ads in the book. At least 13 of those businesses are still alive today. The book is 26 pages (30 if you count the covers) and was printed on fairly good paper.

It would seem that the picnic was a highlight of the employees. Remember that back then in simpler times a day off work relaxing in a shady park with your family eating hot dogs and drinking coffee was all that was needed to make the day a memory.

So enjoy reading about the Logan Valley Picnic history as printed in the 1948 program book. The book featured a photo of Logan Valley's newest piece of equipment inside the front cover, bus #71, their first diesel powered vehicle from 1947 and the back featured a photo of a man in uniform from Gable's Department Store.

I am not sure how much longer Logan Valley held the picnic after 1948. The trolleys were gone by 1954 and shortly thereafter they filed with the PUC to go out of business. The bus authority (Amtran) took over operations in 1959 so I imagine that the picnic did not last too many years after the 1948 event.

HISTORY OF THE LOGAN VALLEY PICNIC
(from the program book)

On July 4, 1893, Lakemont Park was opened by the Logan Valley Electric Railway Company. Since this date Logan Valley employees have holding their annual picnic at Lakemont Park.

The first outing of any great success was held on September 10 and 11, 1917. The picnic was held for two days so that all motormen and conductors could attend. Men worked fifteen hour shifts so that half of the men could attend the first day and the other half went to the picnic the second day. The picnic committee for 1917 was as follows: Herman Kane, J.C. Cherry, Charles Fleck, Sam Aukens and H.J. Crane.

In 1918 the picnic was canceled due to World War I. The picnic was resumed in 1920 and was held on September 14 and 15. The picnic committee chairman was Judson Mills. Men worked the same shifts these two days as before the war.

The picnic continued until 1930 when it was postponed because of the depression until 1938. Plans were made to have the picnic as soon as flood repairs from St. Patrick's Day flood in 1936 could be made. For the first time in the history of the annual picnic, it was a one day affair. The picnic committee was as follows: James Ringer, Daniel McGlynn, W.C. Cride, C.A. Hoofnagle, C.W. McGinley, J. Justice, Archie McKee and Jack Matthews. The committee was praised for the good coffee and hot dog sandwiches served.

In 1940 the picnic was canceled again due to World War II. The picnic was resumed in 1946. The picnic committee was Daniel McGlynn, C. Gunsallas, E. Fleck, J.F. Dunio, C.E. Rupert, C.L. Utley, O.R. Fraley, J.D. Fochler, and Betty Schreiber. The committee was credited with making it the most outstanding of all the picnic held thus far. In 1947, the picnic was held on July 22 and it was a great success.

This year, 1948, the picnic committee was as follows: Daniel McGlynn, C.L. Utley, C.E. Rupert, Betty Schreiber, John Fochler, James Gannarelli, Harry B. Brown and W.F. Libold. The committee wishes all of you a pleasant day at this 1948 Logan Valley picnic.

The picnic committee takes this space to express our appreciation to the people who made this book possible by their ads.

We urge everybody that reads this book to consider them. They helped us, now it's our turn to help them.

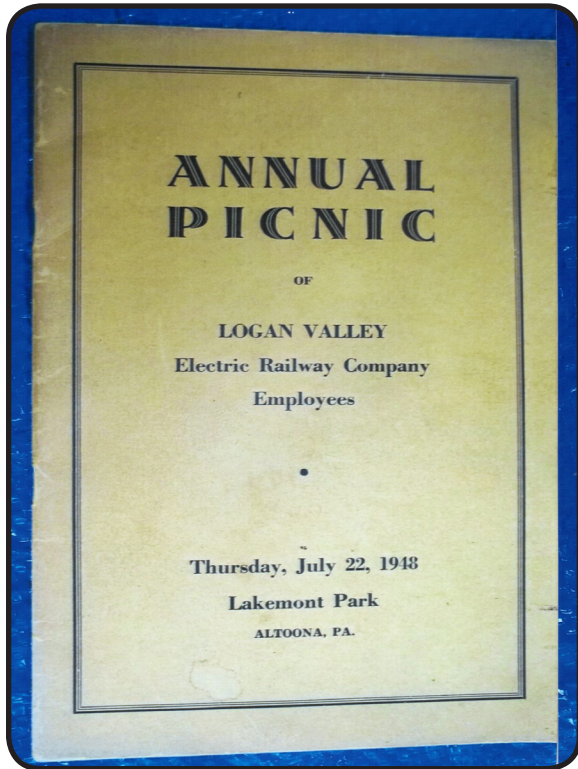


Photo of book cover front

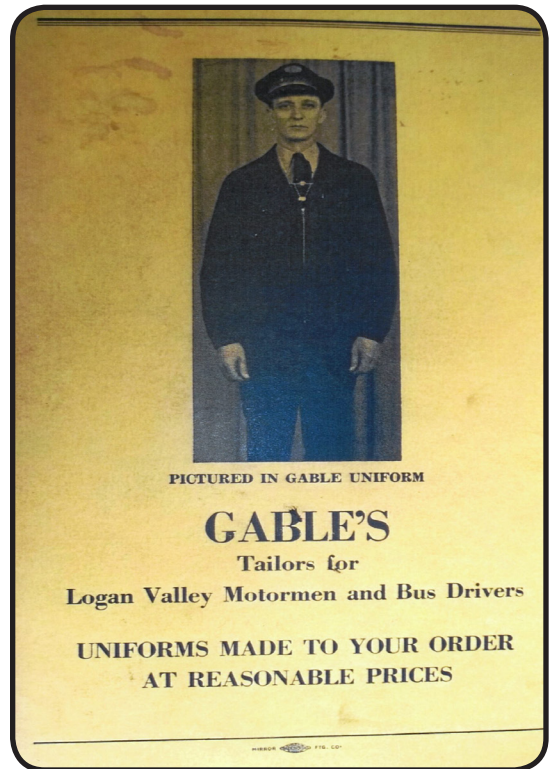


Photo of book cover back

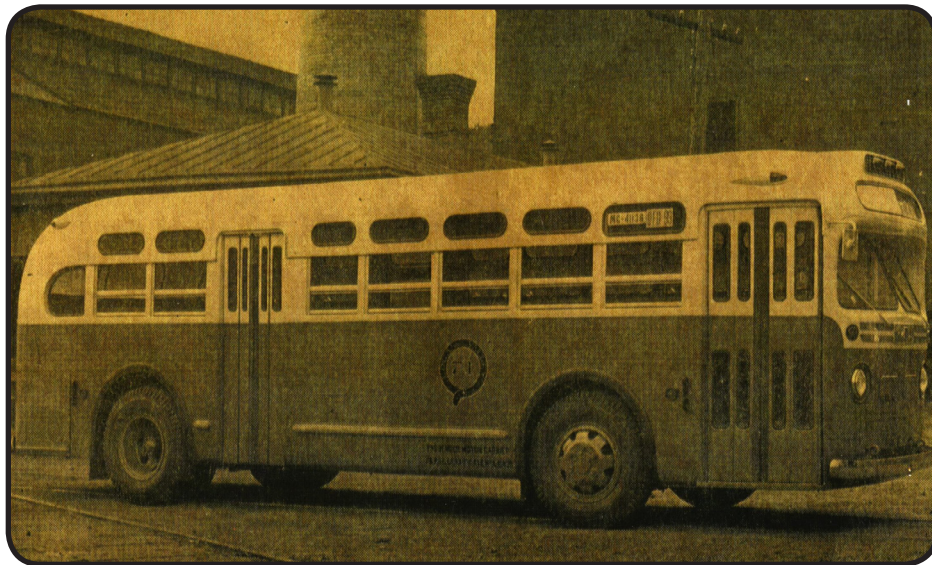


Photo of bus #71 inside front cover

IN MEMORY

Another humble hard working local historian has passed away. Robert “Bob” Leidy (October 2, 1925 - September 10, 2017), was very involved in the history of Lakemont Park. He was a founding member and a Board Chairman of the Lakemont Park Historical Museum Inc. It was largely due to his efforts that the history book on Lakemont Park was published. He also oversaw the building of the Lakemont Park Museum which operated on donations and volunteer labor until it closed a few years ago when these items dried up.

He was also a board member of the Roller Coaster Restoration Inc., which was successful in bringing the Leap the Dips, the world’s oldest wooden roller coaster, back to operating condition.

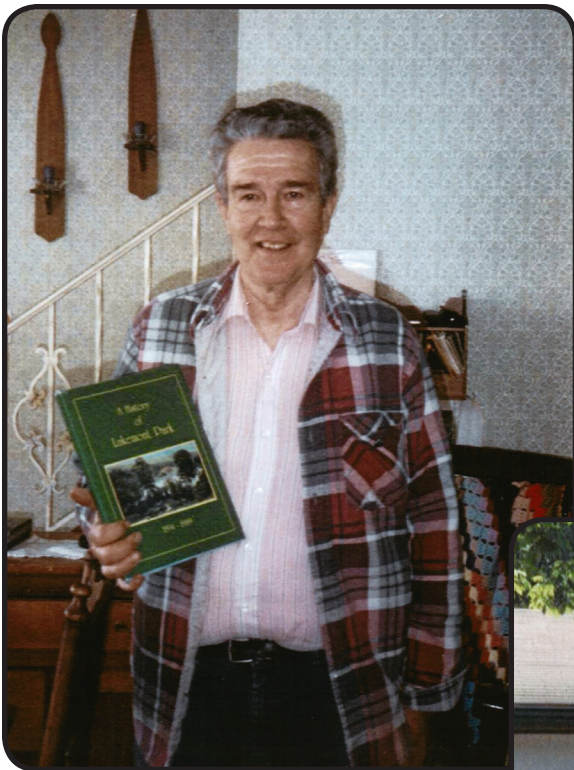
For many years he also planted the flower gardens at the park during the Lakemont, Boyertown, and again Lakemont Park days.

He most likely had the largest collection of photos and postcards of the old park which he shared with all through the book when published. His knowledge of the park took second place to no one. He willingly shared with all who wanted to sit down and listen during the museums open days.

But as is usual, many of his photos and much of that information could not be printed in the history book due to space and cost limits.

With his passing, another local historian has left a really big pair of boots that most likely will never be filled again.

May you rest in peace, Bob.



Bob with the first book off the press.



Bob speaks at the grand opening of the Lakemont Park Museum

LOGAN VALLEY TRAIL ONE STEP CLOSER

For many years people around Bellwood have been proposing and promoting a hiking/biking trail between Altoona and Tyrone using the old Altoona and Logan Valley Electric Railway roadbed.

This past year the proposed trail has gotten a little closer to reality. Antis Township, where most of the trail is to be located, received a \$25,000.00 grant to be used for a feasibility study for the 5.8 mile trail.

This past August the Blair County Commissioners authorized a letter of support to help Antis Township apply for funds towards actual construction of the trail.

The funds would come from a Penn-Dot Transportation Alternative Program set aside which can be used for alternative transportation projects which include Rails to Trails.

The proposed plans call for this trail to connect with the Bell's Gap trail from Bellwood to the Blair County line near Blandburg by using the new pedestrian bridge over the Norfolk Southern tracks near the Bellwood-Antis Community Park in Bellwood.

It is still maybe years until anyone can hike or ride on this proposed trail, but it is now One Step Closer.

LOOKING BACK

With the 50th Anniversary looming in the not so distant future, we will take a look back at some things that have recently celebrated anniversaries.

10 years ago Amtran took out an option to purchase the vacant Roaring River Mills 3.2 acre complex along 6th Avenue. It was the former trolley barn and bus garage of the Logan Valley.

10 years ago the Toy Train Operating Society of Arcadia California held a convention at the Blair County Convention Center with Donald Goeble of Roaring Spring and President of the Horseshoe Curve Chapter acting as host.

25 years ago the Railroaders Memorial Museum Board held a meeting and bar-b-q at the Horseshoe Curve and voted to accept a \$1.1 million grant to restore the K-4 Steam Locomotive. The grant required the elimination of the Keystone Restoration Inc. group of about 60 members so that the work could then be put out for bid.

50 years ago many local bands took part in the Penn State Blue Band Day at University Park. Over 5,500 instrumentals, majorettes and color guard members were directed on the field by Blue Band Director Dr. James Dunlop. (Assistant Editor, Leonard Alwine was a member of the Altoona High Band on the field that day).

60 years ago, Wham-O produced the first plastic frisbee, Random House published The Cat In The Hat by Dr. Seuss, Ford Motor Company introduced the Edsel Car, and Burger King launched the Whopper Sandwich.

70 years ago, PRR Employee Thomas F. Iddings passed away. He was known as the "Lucky Penny Man" because of his habit of passing out pennies to visitors passing through the Altoona Station.



Mr. Iddings is buried in Grandview Cemetery and today people still place pennies on his tombstone in his memory.

WHERE DID IT GO?

In a town built by a company which employed a large percentage of the population it was not uncommon for that company to do “community” things.

That was very true with Altoona and the Pennsylvania Railroad. They built and/or funded many things in Altoona for the benefit of the citizens and employees of the PRR. The hospital, Cricket Field, golf hill, the original Mechanics library and so on and so on. Most of these things have passed away due to “redevelopment” taking over the city in the late 1960s and 1970s. Of course, the demise of the PRR did not help matters any either.

One of the little, actually big, things that was made by the PRR that a lot of people did not know about it’s origin, was the huge flower pot located in Lakemont Park.

The flower pot was constructed in the Tin Shop of the Altoona Car shops. The PRR built this to be part of a float for a parade in Altoona in 1945. It was built and dedicated to Medal of Honor recipient, Robert E. Laws. Following the parade it was taken to Lakemont Park and placed on a cement foundation along one of the paths between the skating rink and the Casino.

I am not sure of the exact size or of the material used in it’s construction. The two photos that I have acquired show that it most likely was at least 10 feet high and maybe 6 to 8 feet across. It also had to be made out of a material which held up well in outdoor weather, perhaps stainless steel or copper.

I remember seeing this flower pot at Lakemont Park many times when I visited the park years ago. It sat there for 40 years from 1944 to 1984. It disappeared when Lakemont Park was leveled to make way for Boyertown USA during the winter of 84-85. Perhaps it was made of a material which was valuable as scrap. Any way, it’s disappearance leads one to wonder ... Where did it go?



Flower pot on the float for the parade



Flower pot on display
at Lakemont Park 1944-1984

BAKER MANSION LECTURE SERIES A SUCCESS

This past Spring the Baker's Mansion began a series of free lectures. They are held once a month in the basement of the museum. The series is quite diverse and have been very well received and attended by the public. In fact, most have been standing room only and sometimes even people have been turned away due to lack of space. This happened at the one on the Wopsy Railroad recently.

The list of talks is as follows:

1. Joseph DeFrancesco - The Wreck of the Red Arrow - February 17th
2. Michael Farrow - Altoona's Neighborhoods - March 22nd
3. James Lowe - Review of the U.S. in World War I - April 6th
4. Judith Redline Coopey - Dig or Die World War I - April 26th
5. Robert Jeschonek - The Glory of Gables Department Store - May 24th
6. Jim Fitch - Canoe Creek State Park Lime Kilns - June 28th
7. Brady Crytzer - The Kittanning Raid of 1756 - July 26th
8. Elaine Conrad - Exploring Wopsy Railroad - August 23rd
9. Doug Bosley - Freedom on the Rails, Portage Railroad - September 27th
10. Michael Allison - Things That Go Bump in the Night - October 25th

As stated, the list of topics is quite diverse and there is a little something for everyone. Hopefully the museum will continue this series again next year, as it certainly was a hit.

WOPSY RAILROAD TALK A "SELL OUT"

The talk about Wopsy Railroad and Hotel Resort by Elaine Conrad was a sell out at Bakers Mansion. Many people had to be turned away due to lack of even standing room space. That did not keep the evening from being a success though.

Once turned away, people began socializing outside and I found out that one person had brought some items from the old railroad to the talk in hopes of showing them to Elaine and all who attended.

The man, Luke Baker, from Juniata Gap had some items in his pickup truck which he shared with me as we talked outside. He had some railroad spikes and track pieces which he had found while hunting over the years on Wopsy Mountain. He also had an old sign which was most likely posted at the end of the tracks on the lookout. The photo I took of it did not come out too well. The big thing he had was a broken wheel set from one of the railroad cars which he found alongside the roadbed one time. It took him a lot of work to bring this piece out as it weights quite a bit. Most likely it broke in use and the car had to have a new wheel set replaced on scene and the old one was just thrown over the bank where it lay for many years until Luke found it and pulled it out. The photo of it came out pretty good and I will use it in the article.

On September 21, Elaine Conrad did her program again at the Altoona Library Theatre room and I was able to attend this one. Again it was a near sell out as there were only a couple empty seats. Following the talk the library provided refreshments for all who attended.

So really the turn away for the first talk turned out to be a good thing as I was able to see some artifacts and then hear the talk and eat a snack later at the other talk.



Wheel Set from a Wopsy Railroad Car
as shown by Luke Baker

LOCAL YARD NEWS

In this section, we will report the local news taking place around town.

Several Chapter members worked to replace broken and cracked windows in our cars located at the Wye Switches in Duncansville to get them ready for the fall and Santa Train Excursions. These excursions are now run by the Everett Railroad which leases our cars for the trips. Alan Maples has stated that he is still going to lease our cars next year while he completes restoration of other cars Everett owns which fit into his train consist better.

On October 7th, members Frank Givler, Dick Charlesworth, Don Goeble, and Larry Leamer acted as car hosts for Everett Railroad on the Autumn Glory train rides.

A couple of years ago the Chapter donated \$5,000.00 to the Penn State Altoona Campus for use in scholarships for students taking the Rail Engineering course. At that time it was just beginning. Recently it was announced that the course is now a 4 year program at the Altoona Campus and it has been ABET accredited, the only rail transportation engineering degree program in the United States. Accreditation from ABET assures students that Penn State's Altoona program meets the global standards for rail engineering and signals employers that the students are prepared professionals.

The chapter recently also donated \$1,500.00 to the Geeseytown Fire Co. to help purchase and preserve a 1935 Seagrave Fire Engine. The engine served its life as Engine #4 in the Altoona Fire Department and was recently found for sale in Texas, pretty much still intact. This engine is special to Altoona and the PRR as at one point it's pump needed replaced and the PRR South Altoona Foundry made a replacement casting for the pump, the last item made at the Foundry before it's closing.

On Friday, September 15th, members of the chapter met at the farm of Joey DeFrancesco's grandparents, Rachael and Dink for a covered dish picnic. A good time of food and fellowship around the campfire was had by all who attended the event located East of Tyrone.

The Annual Christmas Party for the Chapter will be held Saturday, December 2nd at 6:00 p.m. at the Geeseytown Fire Hall. Joey DeFrancesco will be the guest speaker. Mr. DeFrancesco, who is the Administrator of the Bakers Mansion Museum, will speak on the Wreck of the Red Arrow. To reserve your spot at the Christmas Party, contact Frank Givler.

The Pennsylvania Railroad Calendars for 2018 are ordered and should be available by the time you read this newsletter. Contact Treasurer Denny Walls to purchase your copy.

The 50th Anniversary history book is getting under way. It will be published for the anniversary in May 2018. It was decided to also include photos of events of the anniversary so it may not be available until June 2018.

In relation to that book, any member who has photos or information about past chapter events PLEASE submit it to Leonard Alwine, Dave Seidel, or Frank Givler by December 10th so that it can be organized into the actual writing of the book which will take place in December and January.

Dick Charlesworth is thinking about a bus trip to the Cass Railway in the future. If interested, let him know so plans can be made.

The grant which the chapter made to Penn State for the Rail Engineering scholarship has been used to help at least six students so far. Enclosed with this Coal Bucket are copies of letters from Penn State and one of the students.



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September 5, 2017

Mr. Francis X. Givler, Jr.
Horseshoe Curve Chapter, National Railway Society
114 Scott Avenue
Altoona, PA 16602-4048

Dear Mr. Givler:

On behalf of Penn State Altoona, it gives me great pleasure to once again thank you for your support of students through the Horseshoe Curve Chapter, National Railway Historical Society Student Award. Your generosity and vision are making it possible for our young scholars to proceed along career paths that lead to the realization of lifelong dreams.

Please find enclosed correspondence from recipients of the Horseshoe Curve Chapter, National Railway Historical Society Student Award that reflects their appreciation for the opportunities your philanthropy has created.

If I can be of assistance to you at any time, please contact me 814-949-5164.

Once again, thank you and best wishes.

Sincerely,

David P. Pearlman, D.Ed.
Director of Student Aid

enc.

Dear Mr. Francis X. Givler, Jr., President,

I would like to take a moment to thank you for selecting me for a Horseshoe Curve Chapter, National Railway Historical Society Student Award. I was genuinely surprised when I received notice that I was the recipient of the award. I always consider it a great honor to be selected for any sort of scholarship or award, and this instance is no different.

I will be entering my senior year of college (my second year at Penn State Altoona, after having completed my first two collegiate years at Penn State Harrisburg). I am looking forward to graduating this upcoming May. I have already been blessed with two internships. One came during my senior year of high school, and I just wrapped up the other last week. Both were with engineering/consulting firms that deal with designing/modernizing railroad infrastructure. Some of the highlights of both included learning about and being able to use different engineering computer programs to help create and modify design plans as well as see many different sides of the rail industry (some of which I had never considered before).

One primary way in which this award will benefit me is that it will help me to cover the cost of my tuition for the Rail Transportation Engineering program. This may sound like a typical use for scholarship or award money, but I like to highlight it because assistance (of any kind) with tuition allows for me to reallocate money to other extracurriculars that will help me build connections within my desired career field. For example, during my junior year, my classmates and I attended the Join Rail Conference (JRC). This allowed for us to learn of the research projects that are currently in progress to better the rail industry. I found my time at this conference to be rather informative and worth the associated cost and time commitments. Thus, thanks to this award, I will better be able to finance outings to other similar conferences and rail industry related events to bolster the contacts and knowledge I have prior to graduating from Penn State. My hope is that this will help me get a leg up on the competition when it comes to seeking a future job. Speaking of which, my "dream career" is to work for a company (either an engineering company or a railroad) that is instrumental in designing the infrastructure for freight railroads across the country. I have had exposure to both highway and railroad network design in the past, and I can truly say that I have enjoyed the engineering behind it all. I still have yet to pinpoint exactly where I should end up in order have this career, but I am confident in what I want to do.

Thank you again for not only sponsoring this award, but for also selecting me to be this year's recipient. The generosity that you exhibit is very much appreciated.

Sincerely,

Matthew Cowan