



Official Newsletter
of



National Railway Historical Society
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Chapter meetings are always on the fourth Tuesday of each month at Railroader's Memorial Museum, 1300 9th Avenue, Altoona, PA, beginning at 7:30 PM EXCEPT DECEMBER unless announced otherwise.

UNDER THE WIRE

by
Leonard E. Alwine

The Original "E" Mail

"You've got mail ! " A very well known phrase in today's computerized society. In this issue of "Under the Wire", we will take a look at what could be called the original "E" mail. We will take a look at trolley cars that carried and sorted and delivered the mail. A sort-of "higher voltage" yesteryear look at "E" mail, aka Electric mail.

The RPO (Railway Post Office) cars were quite successful on railroad trains so it was only natural for someone to try the same thing on street railways in larger towns in America, to speed up the mail handling.

On May 20, 1862, J. B. Murray of New York City filed for a patent to carry mail on street railways, mostly likely horse-drawn equipment at that time. There exists no record of why one actually trying to handle mail under this patent though.

The first Street Car (aka trolley) RPO came about by efforts of St. Louis, Missouri in August and September 1891. Regular postal service began in October 1891 on a route that was designated "Street RPO No. 1". The trolley was actually built very similar to railroad RPO coaches on the interior.

This route was so successful that the Postmaster General in 1894

recommended that other cities establish routes also. New York became the first city to follow this order. Over the next couple of years other larger cities also followed suit.

In all, fourteen cities are known to have had street car RPO service that actually sorted and cancelled mail aboard street cars on city streets. In alphabetical order, these cities were: Baltimore, Boston, Brooklyn, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, New York, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Rochester, St. Louis, San Francisco, Seattle, and Washington D.C.

Street Car RPO's enjoyed a small and short-lived life. After some thirty years, motor cars and trucks began to dominate the city streets. By the mid-1920's, only Baltimore still had Street Car and RPO service. That, too, came to an end on November 9, 1929.

Pennsylvania had two cities which had street car RPO service. The first was Philadelphia which began service December 1892. It began with fourteen rebuilt and powered horse-cars. They were painted white and had gold letters. In 1902, these were replaced by eight new cars numbered M1 through M8. They operated over forty route miles throughout the city. They had a motor man to operate the trolley, a trolley boy to help change the poles, and two mail clerks who sorted and cancelled the mail. Service lasted until November 14, 1915.

The Pittsburgh RPO began June 1, 1898. They had two new cars built by Laclede Car Co. at a cost of \$6,464.00 each. They were numbered 900-901 and later changed to M-245/246. They

operated on an hourly schedule on a round trip through the city. These cars had slots like a mail box in the doors so people could mail letters when the cars were stopped in traffic or at mail drop-off boxes. The mail was sorted, cancelled, and dropped off at postal drop off boxes along the route for mailmen to pick up and deliver to the correct address. Sometimes a letter placed in the trolley car slot was actually delivered to the address in town in less than an hour! A lot quicker than today's mail delivery system. The Pittsburgh RPO closed November 1, 1916.

Altoona and Logan Valley Electric Railway never had an RPO car, but it certainly did carry mail. While there are no written contracts or records of bulk mail being carried by Logan Valley, it could have been possible since the cars passed post offices in Hollidaysburg, Altoona, Juniata, Bellwood, Tipton and Tyrone. So, it could have been possible to have moved mail between those towns, especially at night when passenger traffic was down. The Tyrone-Altoona route would have been a good route to do this since they used "combination cars" at night on this route to deliver freight and packages. Sacks of mail could easily been transported in this way.

What is certain, is that Logan Valley issued special tickets for mailmen to ride from the post offices out to their routes of delivery and these mailmen did carry sacks of mail with them on the trolley cars, a practice that was continued into the bus-era until the advent of the AM-General postal vans and jeeps of recent years.

Just another brief look at the unique heritage that happened “Under the Wire”.

June 1, 2012 (From the Internet)

On its 30th anniversary, Norfolk Southern says thank you

NORFOLK, VA. -- Norfolk Southern marks its 30th anniversary today, acknowledging the people and organizations who have made possible the company's growth.

“The Norfolk Southern of 2012 is safer, more customer-focused, and more successful by every measure than it ever has been,” said CEO Wick Moorman. “We are highly competitive, environmentally conscious, and constantly seeking new opportunities. The future of our business looks very bright.

“For this we thank our employees and their families, customers, shareholders, suppliers, and communities. They have made NS what it is today, and they will carry us forward,” he said.

Norfolk Southern was created June 1, 1982, with the consolidation of Southern Railway and Norfolk and Western Railway, which trace their

lineages to the 1820s. The combination proceeded so smoothly that it was called “one of the most successful mergers in the transportation industry – perhaps in any industry.”

SR and NW had been successful railroads, and the new combination created an organization greater than the sum of its parts. The new NS developed a diversified traffic base among the energy, manufacturing, and finished goods sectors. It became international in its vision, and it built a nascent intermodal program into a key business segment.

On June 1, 1999, NS acquired a large portion of Conrail, increasing market reach and returning rail competition to the Northeast for the first time since the 1970s.

Now NS is the leader in developing public-private partnerships and corridor strategies to improve the nation's freight transportation network, environmental initiatives to reduce railroad and freight shipper carbon footprints, best practices to improve safety, and technology to enhance service.

The new NS is a job creator. In the last decade, the railroad helped locate and expand 1,053 facilities, representing an investment of \$30 billion by NS customers and generating more than 46,000 jobs by those customer companies.

NS itself hired 4,000 new employees in 2011 and plans to hire 2,800 more in 2012 to address attrition and the growing need for freight transportation service.

More of the NS story is reflected in statistics. In 2011 compared with 1982, NS:

- reported an injury ratio of 0.75 per 200,000 employee hours worked, vs. 9.18
- operated 2,060 freight trains a day vs. 1,070
- handled 191.7 billion revenue ton miles vs. 92.6 billion
- generated \$11.2 billion in railway operating revenues vs. \$3.36 billion
- owned assets of \$28.5 billion vs. \$7.8 billion

- achieved an operating ratio of 71.2 percent vs. 80.4 percent
- employed 4,100 locomotives in customer service vs. 2,900
- planned coming-year capital improvements of \$2.4 billion vs. \$180 million

“We have achieved a great deal in 30 years, but in many ways we have only just begun,” Moorman said. “The coming decades will see the economy’s dependence on railroads grow dramatically, and the Thoroughbred of Transportation will set the pace.”

In recognition of its 30 years, NS is painting 20 locomotives in the schemes of selected predecessors, sponsoring a public “family portrait” session of these heritage units July 3-4 in Spencer, N.C., and working with museums in three states on community observances.

NS officers will ring The Closing Bell® on the New York Stock Exchange June 5, and the company is publishing a book, “Eat Steel and

Spit Rivets,” about railroad culture as lived by employees.

June 12, 2012

Schedule announced for Norfolk Southern Heritage Locomotive family portrait

NORFOLK, VA. - Norfolk Southern and the North Carolina Transportation Museum have announced the daily schedule for the display of the Norfolk Southern [Heritage Locomotive fleet](#) at the museum in Spencer, N.C., on July 3 and 4.

The schedule below applies to both days. A map of the museum will be available on site each day of the event.

- 8 a.m. - Gates open
- 8:15 a.m. - 10:45 a.m. - Heritage Power Parade in the area south of the roundhouse. This is a photo event featuring each heritage unit separately and side-by-side with historic locomotives from predecessor railroads.
- 11 a.m. - Welcome, announcements, and safety briefing in the turntable area. Norfolk Southern CEO Wick Moorman will speak on July 3 only.
- 1 p.m. - 2:30 p.m. - Conrail locomotive family around the turntable. Up-close visiting time for Southern and Norfolk & Western family units.
- 2:30 p.m. - 4 p.m. - Norfolk & Western family around the turntable. Up-close visiting time for Conrail and Southern family units.
- 4 p.m. - 5:30 p.m. - Southern family around the turntable. Up-close visiting time for Norfolk & Western and Conrail family units.

- 5:30 p.m. - 8 p.m. - All 20 units around the turntable with NS locomotive 1030 (signifying NS' 30th anniversary) on display.
- 9 p.m. - 11 p.m. - Night photo session. Schedule to be determined.

The [Norfolk Southern Lawmen Band](#) will perform in the afternoon.

Tickets are \$25 for adults and \$15 for children in advance, and \$30 for adults and \$20 for children the day of the event. Children 2 and under are free. Tickets can be purchased at the [NCTM's website](#) or by calling 704-636-2889, ext. 237. Norfolk Southern employees and retirees are eligible for a \$5 discount, with a limit of four tickets per purchase. Some restrictions may apply. Retirees must purchase tickets by phone to get the discount.

Post-Script to NS 30th Anniversary

The “rumor mill” indicates that **Norfolk Southern RR is planning to provide a steam excursion that would operate the weekend of August 11-12, 2012 in the Pittsburgh area as well as the weekend of August 18-19 in the Harrisburg area for NS employees and their families. The power will be NKP 765 from the Ft. Wayne Railway Historical Society. One speculation is for a possible ferry move via Altoona on Monday August 13th.**

Norfolk Southern RR is to be commended for recognizing the roots of their heritage and the significance on its own history. Photos of the heritage units may be found at www.railpictures.net and the Norfolk Southern corporate website.



Above photo by John Gardner of Altoona as these units departed westbound, April 20, 2012.

Kudos to the NS Paint Shop crews who replicated the heritage logos and paint themes to perfection.

EAST BROAD TOP RR

While this is old news as of this writing, most all railfans are aware that the East Broad Top Railroad is unable to operate during the 2012 season, the first such instance since it initiated tourist operations in 1960. We are all saddened by this news, but also hopeful that a plan will be formulated to assure that operations will resume.

From the internet:

“To all our friends, fellow railroaders, and loyal patrons: It is with great remorse that the East Broad Top Railroad officially announces that we will not be operating steam powered excursions for the 2012 season. On April 1st, 2012, the East Broad Top Preservation Association's 3-year lease to operate the East Broad Top Railroad with an option to buy has ended. After painstaking talks and options were evaluated and discussed, no arrangement could be made between the East Broad Top Railroad and Coal Company and the East Broad Top Preservation Association. At this time there are no certainties beyond 2012. We can't say

this is the end of the line, nor can we say this is just temporary. Should any type of operations or events be planned in the future, we will announce them here. Until then there are no further details.

The decision to close this season was a difficult one. The employees of the East Broad Top Railroad would like to say "Thank You" to all of our patrons, fans, and supporters for allowing us to serve you with the enchanting and historical experience on America's oldest operating narrow gauge steam railroad. Rest assured it is difficult for us to accept that we are unable to provide a memorable visit on our railroad, much the same as it is for you to read this announcement. If it were not for the kind support of our visitors over the past 51 years we would have never made it this far. Again, we thank you for the greatest experience we could ever imagine. The East Broad Top Railroad and Coal Company”

Parallel to the “operations” at the East Broad Top Railroad, are the millions of hours (1960-2012) of dedicated time and effort by the “Friends of the East Broad Top RR” in preserving the physical plant what is clearly a national treasure. The many volunteers are to be commended for their time, talent, effort, and monetary contributions to this effort, which continues even as operations are suspended for the 2012 operating season.

ROCKHILL TROLLEY MUSEUM

Will continue to operate during the 2012 season which commenced on Memorial Day. Although a side-by-side facility on the grounds of the East Broad Top Railroad, the trolley museum operations are uninterrupted by a temporary suspension of operations at the East Broad Top RR for 2012. Trolley tours and ride experiences will be available through October and a few special weekends in November/December. For more information, visit www.rockhilltrolley.org.

RAILROADER'S MEMORIAL MUSEUM

Work is progressing rapidly on the roundhouse construction project. The entire structure is under roof and six smokestacks have been applied to the roof. Work is continuing on the interior as of this writing.

The museum's summer concert series "Alive at Five" has commenced and additional programs are scheduled throughout the summer. The next program is: PeaceFrog – The Tribute to Jim Morrison and the Doors, preceded by Felix and The Hurricanes, all taking place on Saturday, June 30th (which will be late notice in this issue of the *Coal Bucket*).. Tickets \$10.00 in advance or \$15. day of concert. Watch for further news and announcements at www.railroadcity.com.

RAILROAD SIGNAL SYSTEMS AND OPERATIONS CHANGE IN ALTOONA

Recap Notes from Pat McKinney:

One

The cut over of ANTIS on Monday & Tuesday 6-11/6-12 is still having some issues. HOMER was cut over on Wednesday 6-13 and is done with the removal of the cantilever signal and the two single PL signals and the placement of the new color light WB signal bridge and the unbagging of a color dwarf and color two light signal mast.



Homer Signal by Dustin Faust of Altoona.

WORKS cut over started today and the cantilever EB signal bridge and the WB PRR style were removed after the new color light cantilever signal bridges were swung into place. So ALTO lost control of WORKS sometime after 8 am this morning and no longer controls HOMER and ANTIS.

ALTO's demise, along with what is left of SLOPE, could come as early as Saturday

morning if all goes well with WORKS and if not, will definitely happen Sunday morning 6-17. When the C&S decide they are ready, they will cut off ALTO from all of the remaining signals and switches along with the last switch and the signals at SLOPE and control will be by the dispatcher, with help from C&S on the ground, at the new CP ALTOONA until all is checked and tested. So either Saturday night or Sunday night, ALTO will be done and CLOSED.

There are switches that still need to be removed and I think two cut and throws at the east end of ALTO and one cut and throw at the east end of SLOPE. Once every thing is controlled by the dispatcher after all the checks and tests, things should start to smooth out at all the interlocking's and train movement will be faster.

I would imagine that the ALTO US&S interlocking machine and model board will be removed as soon as possible, very possibly starting Monday 6-18.

Get camera in hand and be ready possibly Sat. morning and if not, Sunday morning. Should be great shots from the 17th St bridge of the removal of ALTO's signal bridges and a PL and from the 24th ST bridge of the removal of SLOPE'S PRR style signal bridges. Hope someone gets great pictures as I will not be able to get pictures myself and would like to get a few of the signal bridge removals. Hopefully someone will get pictures if they remove the interlocking machine from ALTO Monday, or when that happens.
Pat McKinney

Two

It appears that NS wants to start the cut over of ALTO tomorrow 6-16. Uncertain how long they will keep the operators there during the cut over. Should be excellent opportunities for photos all weekend, especially for the removal of the four signal bridges. I missed the removal of the no.1 sw at SLOPE over a week ago. The only thing working at SLOPE are the westbound and eastbound signals. All of SLOPE's old switches have been removed.

Pat McKinney

Three

Saturday, July 16, 2012 marked the final end to railroading PRR style, in the greater Altoona area. ALTO Tower was closed, and cranes were in place to remove signal bridges containing position-light signal aspects characteristic of the PRR at ALTO, & SLOPE – four signal bridges in all. By the end of the day the tri-color signals were the new landmarks and the old were scrap metal. Down came the signs from ALTO & SLOPE...as did the dwarf & pedestal signals near Altoona passenger station. Today began the future for Norfolk Southern traffic through Altoona. By the end of the day, a sign placed on ALTO tower by Operator Jeannie proclaimed its closing, accessorized by black and silver balloons. An era in railroading history has passed. 17th Street bridge was lined with the requisite railfans



D. W. Seidel

to chronicle this historical segment. While we are sorry to see the end of the Position Light Signal era, we applaud Norfolk Southern Railroad for their investment of millions-\$\$ in the new signal and interlocking systems to modernize the railroad mainlines. Of course, the much revered ALTO Tower is one of those casualties, but we understand serious

efforts are underway to “save” it in some manner. An excellent article on ALTO and the argument for saving it (in a museum) was penned by journalist William Kibler in the Altoona Mirror back in 2001 and, unfortunately, is too lengthy to reprint here.- dws

Following are some photos from railfan Dustin Faust from June 16, 2012: Note: Barry Kaufman has video available for viewing of this “event” .

Picture 1: NS 17G is the last train to pass through a fully intact ALTO. Also of note in these pictures is the Last Tower Operator leaving ALTO. His name was Ron Heiss. 12:05 PM.



Pictures 2: ALTO Eastbound Signal Bridge being lifted from its foundation. 1:06 PM.



Picture 3: Another view of ALTO Eastbound Signal Bridge being Lifted.



Picture 4: Slope Westbound Signal Bridge being lifted from its foundation and moved trackside. 1:21 PM.



Picture 5: Tower Operator Jeannie placing the "Good-bye from the Operators." Sign on the Side of ALTO Tower. 2:20 PM Note: In this photo you can also see the signal bridge at 22nd Street as it is removed.



Note: The photos provided by Dustin Faust are most appreciated. Dustin is a recent college graduate, majoring in History. He is currently seeking career opportunities if readers know of anything. Contact Dave Seidel for the address.



D. W. Seidel

EVERETT RAILROAD COMPANY

Recently acquired a period Combine car with Bessemer & Lake Erie Heritage which had formerly been at the Pennsylvania Trolley Museum and a stint at Canonsburg, PA. Shipped out was the remaining ex-Erie Lackawanna coach acquired earlier from the Knox, Kane & Kinzua. Three passenger coaches with much potential under layers of paint remain under renovation, as time permits, at the Claysburg shop facility. One such car has mahogany veneers under layers of paint which is being returned to natural, with new replacement windows constructed from new mahogany. These “works-in-progress” promise one day to be like a Phoenix rising from the ashes. We look forward to these accomplishments.

WESTERN MD SCENIC RR TRIP

Many of us enjoyed another of Dick Charlesworth’s great bus trips on Saturday, June 9th to the Western MD

Scenic RR at Cumberland, MD. Two busses departed Altoona at 9 AM for the short journey to Cumberland. It was a beautiful blue-sky/white-cloud day as our steam train ascended the sometimes 2.79% grade to Frostburg where we all enjoyed a fine catered meal at the Frostburg Station.

Following our return to Cumberland, our two busses stopped at the Queen City Creamery for an ice cream treat of our choosing – a grand conclusion to the day. Thanks, Dick, for another great travel experience !

ANNUAL CHAPTER PICNIC

Is scheduled for Sunday, August 12, 2012 at the Teeter Lodge near Hollidaysburg/Frankstown. As is customary, arrive hungry (3 PM-on) (we’ll eat around 5 PM) and enjoy a great afternoon in a remote area of Blair County. Tall stories may abound and photographers may enter the “bush”. Many thanks to Will and Diane Teeter for their hospitality. If you need directions, check with a chapter officer. Teeter Lodge is nestled in the forest near the Frankstown Sportsmans Club, not too far from “civilization”. Come out and enjoy a good time. If you haven’t been there you’re missing a nice afternoon. RSVP to Frank Givler at the garage: 943-4942 before 4:30 PM daily.

UNION LEAGUE CLUB

**by
Joe DeFrancesco**

When restoring any object you can expect the unexpected. As we move forward, as a chapter, we must look to the horizon for what lies ahead. As an

organization we are charged with the responsibility of preserving our slice of American history. The story of the Pullman built *Union League Club* is a most dynamic one. Having been in service during the peak of American rail transportation, passenger cars like the *Union League Club* played part in memorable events. Historical events such as the sending off of service men and women during WWII to common everyday life of business men traveling for work, to families traveling on vacation. The *Union League Club* did not play a quarterback role in the game of history, but rather it was on the line advancing the team down the field. In the spirit of teamwork we as a chapter must continue our excellence in rail preservation telling the story of American Rail Transportation.

At the June 26, 2012 chapter meeting held at the Railroaders Memorial Museum, we as agreed to move forward with a special committee consisting of interested individuals who are willing to advance the charge of the chapter to preserve and interpret the story of railroad history. The committee will serve as a foundation to the project seeking objectives and goals. The committee will consist of both realistic and idealistic views. Setting forth a vision while realizing the limitations will ensure the *Union League Club's* stance in history; if you are willing to join our team, we are willing to work with you to advance toward goal line. "ALL ABOARD"

Addendum: The namesake club of this section-"sun-parlor" lounge car, used on the Pennsylvania Railroad's

better passenger trains, traces its roots back to the Civil War and is still an honored institution in the 21st Century.

CHAPTER COACH WORK

Painting work on the interior of coach No. 104 is now in progress, Saturday mornings at the Wye Switches location on The Everett Railroad. Meet (if you wish) 7:30 A.M. at Inlow's Drive-In at Duncansville for Breakfast. Work until noon. Any help will be appreciated. Bring gloves & a bottle of water.

Plans are progressing to convert the brake systems on the coaches this summer as well and should be ready for the November Santa Trains. Additionally, vestibule welding repairs are being arranged.

ALTO MODEL TRAIN MUSEUM

As most of us in Altoona know, the loss of leased space has forced the museum to relocate. Fortunately, space was found at the Antique Depot building in Duncansville. The move has been completed and re-construction of the train layouts in each gage-size is underway. Antiques, Flea Market Items and Trains. A nice location to spend a day.

ALTOONA ASSN. of MODEL RAILROADERS

Congratulations to the club for recently winning a legal battle to remain at the 12th Ward Civic Center. Named as "principal tenant, the club, once confined to the 2nd floor, will now occupy the entire building.

