

I had been wanting to see the bridge, and planning that first trip every since former Coal bucket editor Mike Albanese told me about it many years ago. We had finally planned our first visit for August 2003 as part of a firemen's convention I was attending that same week in Kane, PA. Unfortunately, 26 days before the convention, an F-1 tornado (wind speed 73-112 mph) struck the bridge and laid eleven of the supporting towers down on the valley floor. So, I never got to see the bridge or ride the train.

We still made the trip out from Kane to see the destruction. I stood in awe at the force of Mother Nature. The bridge lay mangled on the valley floor and the entire park was destroyed. Large trees had their trunks twisted off the stump and paths were blocked with downed limbs and other small buildings were damaged. It was hard to believe that such desitruction could have happened in a matter of seconds. I left the park rather sad that day.



### Bridge History

When built in 1882, the Kinzua Viaduct was the highest railroad bridge in the world. It was built so that eight miles of track and roadbed right-of-way would not have to be built over the rough terrain of the region. It was originally built of iron. It was 301 feet high at the highpoint, and spanned 2,053 feet in length. It was pre-fabricated at Clark, Reeves, & Company in Phoenixville PA. Once ready, it was transported to Kinzua where 125 men built the sandstone piers for the foundation and erected the bridge in 94 days.

Freight traffic on the bridge ceased in 1959 and it became part of the State Park system in 1970. Excursion trains across the structure began in 1987. During inspection in 2002, it was found that some of the steel structure had actually rusted-through. In February 2003, a complete re-build and \$12M re-construction was begun. Work progressed until July 21, 2003, when high winds forced the crews to quit early that day. However, at 3:15 PM, the tornado hit the area. In just 30 seconds, the bridge and park were destroyed. Investigation revealed that the original 1882 sandstone anchor bolts, not replaced during the 1900 re-build, had failed. Fortunately, no one was hurt in the collapse. Part of the remaining end of the bridge was built into the lookout, and opened and dedicated September 11, 2011.

Today, you can walk out on the one end that was re-built into a deck and skywalk. It is 600 feet long and is 225 ft high at the deck end. There is a glass floor on the deck which allows you to see the massive structure below. It is breathtaking to stand there and look down through the floor. The day I was there, it was raining and windy and that added to the scary effect of looking down. The rest of the bridge is still on the valley floor, more rusted than it was the first time I was there. The trees in the park are making a slow come-back, but are still very small.

If you are ever traveling PA Route 6, I would recommend a short side trip to see and walk out on the new Sky Walk at Kinzua, which I believe stands as two monuments: One to mankind and their quest to overcome nature, and another to Mother Nature and her ultimate victory.

#### PRIVATE CAR PASSAGE

As mentioned at the October Chapter meeting, the private car *BERLIN*, ex-American Orient Express & Grande Luxe, passed through Altoona westbound on Amtrak's *Pennsylvanian* last week. This car is owned by Kevin Moore, DMD, of Brookville, PA and will be based out of Pittsburgh's Penn Station for the next six months or so. The car is all Pullman (bedroom) with Mahogany paneling throughout. The car is listed in the AAPRCO directory and is available for charters. Dick Charlesworth will explore the possibility of a charter trip to New York in the Spring for the chapter. Stay tuned for further announcements.



#### SANTA TRAINS

As you have no doubt seen in recent press announcements, the SANTA TRAINS are scheduled for the weekends prior to and after, Thanksgiving on the Everett Railroad at Roaring Spring, PA. Car hosts for the days have been assigned and final preparations are being finalized at this writing. Dick Charlesworth and Virginia Seidel are handling the phone calls for ticket reservations and on-line orders are being handled via Railroader's Memorial Museum. Treat bags for the children are being prepared as are the small bags of duck feed for kids visiting the pond at Roaring Spring. We thank everyone who has volunteered in any of the tasks as this is Horseshoe Curve Chapters major annual project which helps us maintain our rail equipment and engage in other restoration efforts.



Santa visits with the children assisted by Nicholas Martino who is collecting Santa 's Letters.



### ANNUAL CHRISTMAS DINNER

Saturday, December 15, 2012  
6:00 PM

Geeseytown Fire Hall  
Reservations due by DEC 1<sup>ST</sup> to  
Frank Givler at Frank's Auto Service  
(814) 943-4942

or

at the e-mail address on page one.

**\$15.00 PP: BEEF & TURKEY**

The annual Christmas dinner is open to our many friends at the Altoona Association of Model Railroaders and Alto Model Train Museum and guests we may wish to include. Come and enjoy great food and fellowship and the usual good hospitality of the Geeseytown Fire Hall.

### NEW ROUNDHOUSE DEDICATED

at

### RAILROADER'S MEMORIAL MUSEUM

As most area residents and railfans know, the quarter-roundhouse at Railroader's Memorial Museum has been under construction for most of this year. With the completion of Phase One – representing the erection of the building and some of the interior, a public open house was held on October 3, 2012 for the museum members and local residents. In addition, a VIP dedication was held on October 4, 2012 to formally dedicate and name the structure the Harry Bennett Roundhouse, in honor of the first Master Mechanic of the Juniata Shop complex when new, circa 1901.

Representatives of Harry Bennett's family attended the dedication and participated in the ribbon cutting. A reception followed, which also included a surprise bronze plaque honoring outgoing State Representative Ric Geist, who has been a staunch supporter for many decades, particularly the funding of the roundhouse project and many past programs.

The Harry Bennett Roundhouse is not yet complete, however, as lighting, heating, plumbing needs to be completed, as well as Penn State Altoona's Laboratory space. Work will also include power to the turntable systems. Also to be included in the new roundhouse are the Memorial Hall plaques formerly housed in Memorial Hall building which is now in use as a maintenance shop. The memorial plaques have all been re-made

in a more prominent format which will enhance the honor wall dramatically.

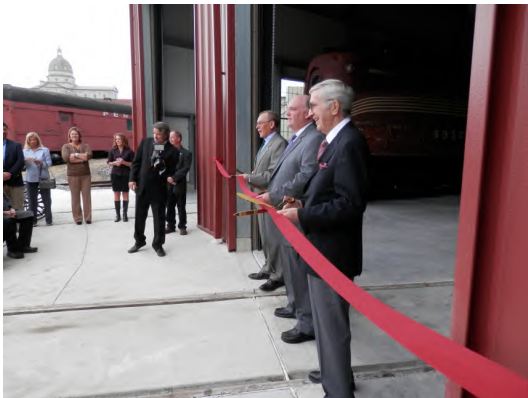
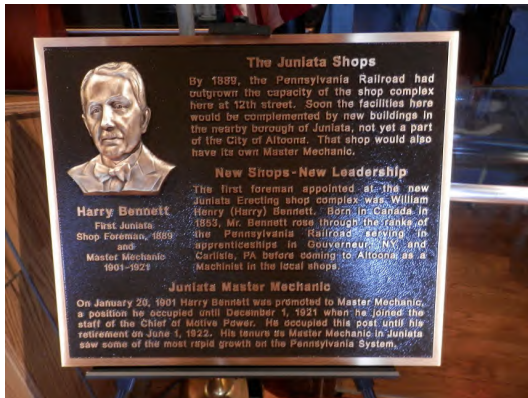
During the open house, GG-1 # 4913 and Observation Car Mountain View were placed in the building, side by side and all were impressed with the spaciousness of the facility.

It was noted also, at the dedication, that construction superintendent David Knox's efforts resulted in no change orders or additional expense during the project to date.





**Bennett Family**



**PA State Rep Ric Geist, Dr. Andy Mulhollen, and Mr. Robert Bennett (grandson of Harry Bennett) cut the ribbon at the roundhouse dedication. The Robert Bennett family generous contribution several years ago provided the incentive for this fine capital project at Railroader's Memorial Museum.**

### **TABLET INSCRIPTION**

**“Harry Bennett  
First Juniata Shop Foreman  
1889  
First Master Mechanic  
1901-1921**

**By 1889 the Pennsylvania Railroad had outgrown the capacity of the shop complex here at 12<sup>th</sup> Street. Soon the facilities here would be complemented by new shop buildings in the nearby borough of Juniata, not yet a part of the City of Altoona. That shop would also have its own Master Mechanic.**

### **NEW SHOPS – NEW LEADERSHIP**

**The first foreman appointed at the new Juniata Shop Complex was William Henry (Harry) Bennett. Born in Canada in 1853, Mr. Bennett rose through the ranks of the Pennsylvania Railroad serving in apprenticeships in Gouverneur, NY, and Carlisle, PA before coming to Altoona as a machinist in the local shops.**

### **JUNIATA MASTER MECHANIC**

**On January 20, 1901 Harry Bennett was promoted to Master Mechanic, a position he occupied until December 1, 1921 when he joined the staff of the Chief of Motive Power. He occupied this post until his retirement June 1, 1922. His tenure as Master Mechanic at Juniata saw some of the most rapid growth on the Pennsylvania System.”  
end**

### **ALTOONA MIRROR ON THIS DATE OCT 27 25 YEARS AGO**

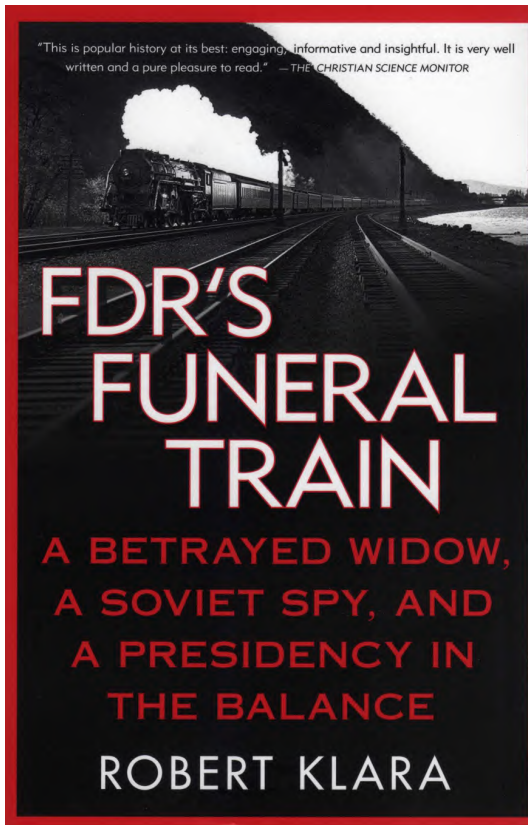
**“The former Pennsylvania Railroad office building at 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 12<sup>th</sup> Street was donated to the Greater Altoona Economic Development Corporation by Conrail, which hoped to sell or lease it to the Railroaders Memorial Museum.”**

**....and the story continues as the primary museum space for Railroader's Memorial Museum today.**



BEST WISHES TO ALL  
FOR A  
HAPPY THANKSGIVING  
MERRY CHRISTMAS  
AND  
HAPPY HOLIDAY SEASON

### RECOMMENDED READING



Paperback via Amazon.com for \$10.98.  
Published by Palgrave MacMillan. Retail  
book store price \$16.00. 244 pages with index.

“A riveting tale of how several railroads  
brought Franklin D. Roosevelt’s body home.”  
*Trainstalk*

“A book that reveals much of the heretofore  
hidden angst and intrigue that had  
accompanied a dead president on his final  
journey back home.”  
*The Daily Progress (Charlottesville)*

“There is something almost terrifying in the  
transition of a presidential train into a funeral  
train.”  
*Thomas F. Reynolds, Chicago Sun, April 14,  
1945*

### EVERETT RAILROAD COMPANY

*Improvements and modifications are underway  
at the Everett Railroad Company’s location at  
Wye Switches, Duncansville PA as seen in the  
following photos dated Oct 28, 2012:*



*Mr. Alan Maples of the Everett RR Co. stated  
his RR is constructing a 4800 sq ft single track  
engine house (lower photo-right) to provide  
inspections, light inspections and passenger car  
work at Duncansville while retaining Claysburg  
for heavy repairs.*