



Official Newsletter
of



National Railway Historical Society
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www.trainweb.org/horseshoecurve-nrhs

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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.

RAILCAMP 2012
by
Andrew Dietrick

Note: Andrew was co-sponsored at RailCamp this year by Horseshoe Curve Chapter, NRHS

How I Got Interested in Trains and My Adventures at Railcamp

This is how I got involved with trains. I have been a train buff since I was 2 years old, with my collection of Thomas the tank engine, and lots of rides behind steam locomotives like Strasburg/Great Western 2-10-0 90 or East Broad Top 2-8-2 Mikado's 14 and 15, or riding NRHS Excursions like the Reading and Northern Hopper Jet Excursion. When I was 10 years old, I received a subscription to Trains magazine from my parents, and the articles on steam trains fascinated me! When I was 14, I decided that I wanted a career with Steam Railroading. Then, I got to go to rail camp! I wrote letters to the NRHS Chapters in the state asking them to sponsor me and, after an enjoyable interview with some of the members, the Altoona Chapter and the the Lackawanna and Wyoming Chapter agreed to sponsor me. This is my story about my week at the Steam town National Historic Site.

As I arrived at Scranton, I was able to see Canadian National 2-8-2 No. 3254 pulling one of the last yard shuttles of the day. When I arrived at the University of Scranton, I was greeted by Mr. Barry Smith, Vice President of the NRHS and the crew of counselors of Railcamp. After we settled in, we met downstairs for a brief orientation in the 1st floor lounge of Cordon Hall. After the orientation and dinner, we went to see Mr. Kenny Ganz of Steamtown N.H.S. He showed us a PowerPoint about from how Steamtown started, until to today here in Scranton. What I learned from that powerpoint was that Strasburg's 89 was acquired from Steamtown U.S.A. back in the 1970's when Steamtown was still in Vermont. He showed us a picture of Steamtown's founder, F. Nelson Blount, in the cab of the Green Mountain Railroad 89 (later Strasburg 89) after the power point.

Then it was off to bed to rise early for a ride to Amtrak.

Day 1: we received a wakeup call at 5:30 in the morning so that we could prepare and be ready for the ride down to Wilmington to tour Amtrak's car shops at the Wilmington and Bear Delaware shops. On the ride down, we saw one NS Geep. At Wilmington, we were all waiting to tour the shops and a few regionals went by. When the Acela Express came through, we had a little photo line when it went by. As I walked into the Wilmington Locomotive and Car Shops, I was not only stepping into an Amtrak backshop, I was also standing in a piece of history. The building was built by the PRR to service the famous GG-1's and now Acela Express and HPP-8's at Wilmington. They gave us a thumb drive in the design of their newest electric that will replace the current war horses, starting in 2013.

After Wilmington, we toured the Bear Car Shops. We saw a lot of Amfleet coaches and Acela Express passenger Coaches. (Amtrak is currently expanding the Acela express by adding Cars.) We were able to climb into a PRR Metroliner Car. I learned from Amtrak that it takes a lot of craftsmanship to keep Amtrak's cars and locomotives on the road. We arrived back in Scranton around 8:30 that evening and had a briefing before heading to bed.

Day 2: We were woken up around 6:00 so that we could be ready to go to Steamtown. We were doing interpretations on a locomotive RPO, caboose or boxcar. I was doing the coupler and demonstrated on the cut away steamer 8. One thing I learned from interpretation is that being a tour guide is a lot harder than it looks. That afternoon, we went to the Lackawanna Coal Mine tour in McDade Park. The Lackawanna Coal mine tour (slope 190) is 1 of 3 anthracite tourist mines in the state of Pennsylvania. The other two are Pioneer Tunnel in Ashland, PA and No. 9 mine, in Lansford PA. After being pulled out of slope 190, we went to the Anthracite Museum to learn more about the Scranton Area and anthracite around the area. I learned at the mine and the museum, that it's a slope tunnel mine instead of the

tunnel mines like the Pioneer Tunnel or the no. 9 mine.

After the mine and the Museum, we went back to our dorms and filled out our journals. We went to dinner and then relaxed for the rest of the night.

Day 3: We walked to Steam town to work on locomotive stills. We created them using skills in welding, plasma cutting, grinding, and riveting. I learned that riveting is a fine art. After I was done with all of these skills, I went over to the paint booth to have my still painted. The Steam town Shop crew said I did a good job for a first time welder. I learned that welding and plasma cutting are some tools need to fix a steam locomotive or make new parts for it. In the afternoon we had presentations done in the Steamtown Theater. The first presentation was done by Joe McHugh & Chris Jagodzinski about careers with Amtrak. I learned that Amtrak has good benefits, but that you might be on call 24/7. The next presentation was done By Mike Muldowney about the generation of steam. I learned that when cleaning the ash pan, you need to divert water to cool the ashes to reduce the risk of getting burned, or causing the ties under the locomotive to burn.

Day 4: We walked to Steamtown and learned about Operation Lifesaver from Officer Tom Walsh from the Canadian Pacific Railway. Then we went into the yard to learn how to replace a brake shoe. I learned how to operate a brake handle on a coach. My group inspected underneath 3254, and we all went to tour the Lackawanna F7 unit that was sitting in the roundhouse. I learned that, inspecting locomotives, even steam locomotives, is required by FRA, to inspect them for defects or other problems. We were having lunch in the restoration lunch room when someone mentioned that 3254 was firing up. Not missing this opportunity, several of my group went to the Roundhouse. There simmering in her stall was 3254 fired up and ready to go for the yard shuttle on Friday.

In the Afternoon we all took a ride on the Electric City Trolley to their trolley shop. My favorite part of the ride was when we went through the mile long Crown Ave tunnel. I have been to the Rockhill trolley museum in

Rockhill Furnace, and I give the ECTM two thumbs up! I learned that the trolley line we rode was the Laurel line, Scranton's trolley line, now operated by the Delaware Lackawanna Rail Authority.

Day 5: The big day came when we were going to operate trains big and small, steam and diesel. My group got first dibs riding the high-railer. I learned how to put wheels on a High-railer, which is used with crews that maintain and inspect the track. After that, we all went over to the small live steamer being prepared by Bruce Mowbray. Bruce showed me how to operate the live steamer. I was able to shovel some coal into it like on a Big Steam Locomotive. When I operated that live steamer, I felt like a Steam engineer on a full sized steamer. I learned that running the live steamer is like the real one, but on a smaller scale. It's a good way to start working with steam engines, and gives experience that can help you work your way up to the full sized steam locomotives. While waiting for my group to operate the 514, it gave me a number of times for 3254 to perform photo run bys. One the times of during the day, the fireman on 3254 let us come into the cab of 3254 a few at a time. I was able to blow the whistle on 3254. I felt like I was the 3254 engineer for a minute. That afternoon, my groups learned to couple and uncouple, and operate the Nickel plate road 514. I was one of the first few people to couple and uncouple 514. First I used the circle motion to back up. When 514 got close, I held out my hand to slow and then waved it back and forth to stop. After stopping, I used 3 step protection and my engineer answered back with 3 step Protection. After checking the couplers, I used 3 step production down. My engineer answered back with 3 step protection down. After I signaled 514 to back up, we made the coupling. Then I used the stretch signal to stretch the couplers. I went down to hook up the air hoses and I used 3 step protection down. My engineer answered back with 3 step production down. Now with uncoupling, I pulled the cut off lever and the pin came out of the tight lock. I signaled my engineer to move forward and 514 gave me two blasts on the horn. The 514 moved and the air hoses automatically uncoupled. Shortly after, I signaled her to stop. Then it was my turn to ride the 514. I was filled with excitement! I climbed on board after being the conductor

back up. I switched seats and I was in the engineer's seat of 514 ready to go. With 1750 horsepower at my fingertips she was in my control. But we were going yard speed. The horn on 514 is like the ones of the gg1's when the stopping the GP9. I pulled on the engine brake and slowly 514 came to a smooth stop. She's a nice engine to run and ride. From what I learned from being the conductor and engineer on 514 it gives me a taste what conductors and engineers have with communication when coupling or uncoupling cars or Locomotives on the big railroads like Norfolk Southern or Reading and Northern. After I was done running the 514, I was watching 3254 pulling yard shuttle trains and watching them put the 3254 away.

After they had 3254 away, I and a couple of rail campers and friends hopped on board the 514 to ride with it in to the Roundhouse. I was sitting in the fireman's seat of 514. Then we all went back to Steamtown to go have dinner with family and friends. After dinner we were presented our Railcamp certificates and other goodies, like special shirts that proclaimed we were railcamp survivors. After getting our goodies, we packed up our stuff and said goodbye to our newly made friends, and goodbye to Steamtown crews that were with us. The skills I learned at Railcamp would help me with a career as a Locomotive engineer or a Conductor for a short line like the Reading and Northern Railroad or the Strasburg Railroad. It's been a blast for me working with steam locomotives!

I would like to thank the following people and NRHS chapters that helped me to come to Railcamp. I thank Mr. Barry Smith, Mr. Gary Yanko, Ms. Erica Bauer, Ms. Janice Bauer, Mr. Clifford Clements, Mr. William Chapman, Mr. Andrew Morris, Mr. Mike Muldowney, Mr. Kevin Phalon, Mr. Alex Polimeni. Mr. Bud Thompson, Lackawanna and Wyoming valley Chapter of the NRHS and Horseshoe Curve Chapter of the NRHS, Amtrak, Canadian Pacific Railroad, Steamtown N.H.S., MR Bruce Mowbray. Mr. Kipp Hagen Superintendent Steamtown N.H.S., park ranger Mr. Kenny Ganz, and most of all my mom and dad.

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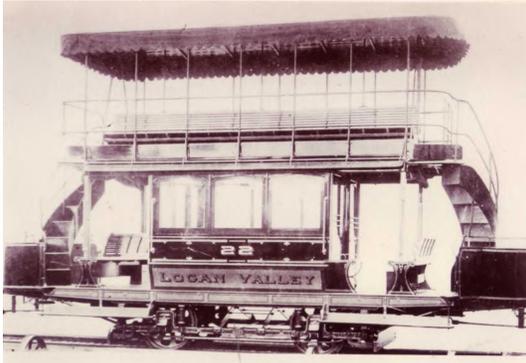
UNDER THE WIRE

by
Leonard E. Alwine

Time For A Good Old Fashioned Breezer Ride

As I sat melting in the heat with temps around the 100-degree mark this summer, I couldn't help but wish for the good "olde" days and a trolley ride to the park on an old fashioned "breezer" car. Actually, they were called open cars but received the nic-name "breezer" due to the air breezing past you as they ran down the tracks.

From approximately 1890 to 1920, any trolley company worth a grain-of-salt would have had some for of an open car for the summer months and, of course, a park outside of town that usually could only be reached by riding on the trolley line.



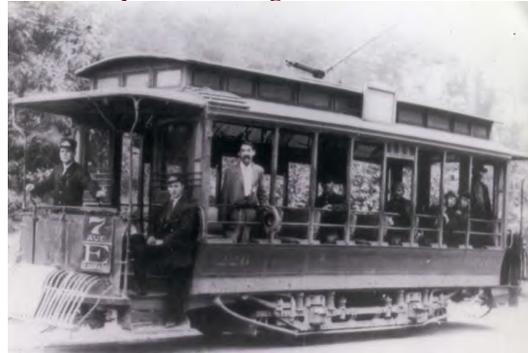
Trailer Car # 22 (Brill). This car perished in a carbarn fire in 1898.

The parks always had a lake or pond for swimming and boating, a gazebo or bandstand from which bands would play period music in the evenings for listening and dancing, sometimes even a large dancehall was constructed for bad weather, and there were usually picnic grounds, a midway with period games and foods at concession stands. And, of course, there were lots of lights to make the night time look festive; an abundance of tall trees also made the evenings cool with their shade and 'natural' air-conditioning.



The Midway at Lakemont Park near the Merry-Go-Round

The combination of the open trolley ride to the park and the 'cool' park made it a place to go evenings and weekends to get away from the hot city and its smog and dirt.



A&LVERY # 226, a semi-convertible car.

For the trolley company, it meant increased ridership at non-peak times and since they also owned the park, monies spent there was just another plus in the company coffers.

Logan Valley (Altoona & Logan Valley Electric railway) was no exception to this plan. They had 30 open cars and several semi-open trailer cars in their fleet, and, of course, they had Lakemont Park. The open cars had seats or benches that ran across the car body, making it possible to load and unload rapidly right out the side of the car. To keep things going faster, the conductor usually walked along the running board as the car ran down the tracks and collected fares.

The trailer cars on the Logan Valley were double deck and had open seats and a closed center section which could be used if the ride back home became cold. These cars were towed by the power car and doubled the load carrying possibilities without the extra expense of another crew. Logan Valley also had some semi-convertible cars which had windows and frames that could be pushed up

into the car-body to act like an open car. These cars still had to be loaded from the ends and a center aisle to the seats which took longer, but they could be used year-round with the windows closed, which was a savings option for the company.

Lakemont Park was a nice get-away also. There was the large man-made lake with a boat rental, the Casino for gatherings, a dance hall, and the Theatre-n-the-Woods (later the roller skating rink) from where one could watch summer stock production stage shows. They also had the gravity railroad (Leap The Dips), a merry-go-round, the Shoot-the-Chute (a water log flume ride), miniature train, and many pavilions with stone fire places for picnics. Also included was the midway with period games and concessions, all snuggled under mature oak trees which kept it cool and shaded on the hottest summer days.

Lakemont Park was the place to go and many citizens of Altoona, Juniata, Hollidaysburg, Bellwood, and Tyrone did just that, riding the open cars on a hot summer evening. Many of these riders were families out for an evening with the kids, but some were young adults out for a refreshing evening of maybe even to find romance. Many young persons from the area became couples after meeting on the trolley car ride to Lakemont Park (I suppose it could still happen today but riding an air-conditioned bus just doesn't seem as romantic.)



A full Open Car # 26 on the trolley loop at Lakemont Park

Some of those couples were kind of close to me. It was my Uncle Leonard, (whom I was named after) and his eventual wife, Jean. They met on a trolley ride to the park and after some dancing and popcorn, they sat together for the ride back to town. After many more trolley rides to the park, they got married a few years later.



An Open Car returning to Altoona (back) near the Boat Dock at Lakemont Park

Many years after, while Uncle Leonard was a preacher at a Titusville church, he told the story of how they met to his congregation as he and Jean celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. A person in the congregation owned an antique shop and had an old trolley roll sign from Logan Valley in stock. He loaned it to Uncle Leonard with the instructions that he and Jean were to put it on a table with a fan and sit in front of it. They were to turn on the fan to re-create the breezer effect and sit there and remember the days of old. They did just that and had a very nice memory that night.

Interestingly, a few months later while Leonard was visiting my mother, he related this story to her which prompted me to call him and see if he still had the roll sign. He had given it back, but then called the man and found out it was still for sale. The next evening I drove to Oil City to purchase the sign. Although Uncle Leonard and Jean have passed on, I still have a very nice piece in my Logan Valley Election with a special memory of them.

As I sit here and sweat, maybe I should put that roll sign and a fan and see if those "Good Olde Dayz" of the breezer ride can return.

VISITING KINZUA SKYWALK

by
Leonard E. Alwine

On July 28, 2012, my wife Diane and I made a visit to the Kinzua Skywalk. We were at Mahaffey Church Camp and decided to take a trip farther north that day to see what had been done since the bridge was destroyed by high winds shortly before our prior visit on August 16, 2003.