

Official Newsletter  
of



NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P. O. Box 1361

Altoona, PA 16603-1361

[www.hscnrhs.org](http://www.hscnrhs.org)

**Winter 2018**

**CHAPTER OFFICERS**

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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](http://www.nrhs.com).**

## **CONCLUDING THE CELEBRATION OF 50 YEARS**

The final two events for the Chapter's 50th anniversary celebration have taken place. The first was the chapter picnic, which was held August 24th and it is reported in the following article written by Joseph Harella.

### **HORSESHOE CURVE CHAPTER NRHS**

#### **REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING**

**AUGUST 28 2018**

The regular monthly meeting of the Horseshoe Curve Chapter NRHS scheduled for August 28<sup>TH</sup>, was canceled due to the chapter picnic which was held on August 24<sup>TH</sup>.

The picnic was held at the Deer Hollow Bed & Breakfast, operated by Rachel and Dink Gensimore in Tyrone, Pa.. The Gensimores are grandparents to Joe Defrancesco.

The menu consisted of typical picnic fare, hot dogs and hamburgers with a variety of sides to go along. The grill was manned by Pres. Givler who did an excellent job as there were no complaints. Everyone completed their meal with a trip through the dessert buffet.

The rural setting made for a very relaxing atmosphere. The members and guests all enjoyed intelligent conversation before, during and after the meal.

Some members and guests then ventured over to the bonfire which illuminated the area and kept the bugs away. Everyone had a very enjoyable time. Thank you goes out to Rachel and Dink for hosting the party.

JOSEPH HARELLA

RECORDING SECRETARY

HORSESHOE CURVE CHAPTER NRHS

The next event was the train ride on the Everett Railroad's private car on October 20th.

## **A RIDE ON THE PUMPKIN PATCH EXPRESS**

**By Leonard Alwine**

On Saturday, October 20, 2018, 37 members of the Chapter took an all day ride on the Everett Railroad. They rode on #912, the office car of the Everett Railroad which was added as a 5th car on the train that day. This car was originally a Baltimore and Ohio car.



Engine #11 and the train depart  
the Hollidaysburg Station

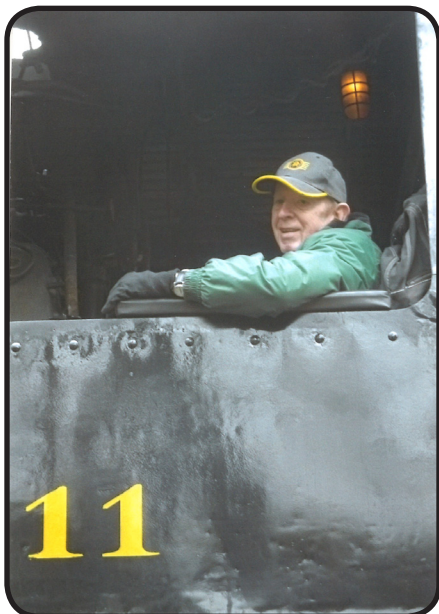
There were four round trips that day from Hollidaysburg to Kladder Station. They all were invited to get off the train and view the pumpkin patch. Kids were allowed to pick out a pumpkin and take it home.



Kids picking out pumpkins at the Kladder Station stop

The roundtrip of about 10 miles took about an hour with the pumpkin stop. The car #912 rode quite smoothly and was still rather plush inside. Dick Charlesworth arranged to have cookies, meat and veggie trays on board for the members eating pleasure. Soda and water were also available. It was a nice time of food and fellowship along with the ride. It is believed but not confirmed that Joe Harella ate more than anyone else on the ride! (Some of those sandwiches he made may have been for others riding in the back of the car.)

Frank Givler, Dave Behe, Joe Harella, and Diane Alwine look over the lunch table on the train ride



On the return trip, Dave Seidel, a founding member of the chapter, was granted the privilege of riding in the cab of Engine #11.

Dave in the cab of #11 during return trip #2. Even after the ride he still had a clean face.

He was supposed to shovel coal as payment for riding in the cab but once seated he just enjoyed the ride.

It was a nice day even though it was cold and rainy and the fall foliage was still all green. Mother Nature just isn't cooperating this year. A special thanks goes out to Allen Maples, owner of the Everett Railroad, and his staff which made this special day possible for the Chapter to celebrate their 50th Anniversary.



Dick Charlesworth and others ride the open platform of car #912 on the 3rd trip of the day.

## **FIRE STORIES FOR OCTOBER FIRE PREVENTION MONTH**



A dog's dream come true!  
A trailer load of new fire hydrants.  
Len Alwine caught this image on film at  
Ward Trucking last year.

**Editor's Note:** The following two articles are enclosed with this Winter issue due to Fire Prevention Week being held in October right in the middle of this issue's time frame for writing articles.

Railroads played a very important part in bringing the Great Chicago Fire under control by hauling firemen and equipment from many distant cities to Chicago to help fight that fire.

Also the article on the Altoona Works PRR Fire Department is gleaned from a history which I researched and wrote for the Altoona Fire Department's 100th Anniversary in 1995. I hope the members will enjoy these historic articles.

- Leonard Alwine, Editor

## **ORIGIN OF FIRE PREVENTION WEEK**

By October 8, 1871, Chicago had not any rain for 14 weeks. Everything was very dry. At about 8:30 pm that day, 35 year old Catherine O'Leary went to the barn behind her cottage where she lived with her husband and children to milk her cow.

She had a small lantern with her for light. She sat the lantern down and began milking the cow. The cow kicked it's leg and knocked over the lantern, setting the straw on the floor on fire. Soon all the dry straw and the wooden stall were on fire. By 9:00 pm the entire barn began to burn and her neighbors came with buckets to help try to put out the fire with a bucket brigade. One neighbor William Lee ran three blocks and pulled a fire alarm box #296 which later proved to be not working. At 9:21 pm the night watchman in the fire tower saw the glow in the sky and told the dispatcher to sound box alarm #342 which was about a mile away from the actual fire. As the fire continued to grow in size a 2nd and 3rd alarm were struck followed by a general alarm.

Eventually fire companies and firemen from Milwaukee, Cincinnati, Indianapolis, St. Louis, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, and New York City were called and arrived by special trains to help control the inferno.

By the time the fire was brought under control, an area five miles long and one mile wide, containing over 17,000 homes and businesses was destroyed. Over 300 people lost their lives either in the fire or in the stampede of people trying to flee the flames.

After this, each year since, a National Fire Prevention Week is observed during the week in October which has the anniversary date of the Great Chicago Fire.

## **PRR ALTOONA WORKS FIRE DEPARTMENT**

**By Leonard Alwine**

When the PRR sort of founded Altoona in 1854, there was no organized fire protection for the city other than the tin buckets that each home had and would come together to help each other with a bucket brigade if a fire started.

After a large fire that destroyed the first church built in Altoona, the Citizens Volunteer Fire Company was organized on April 21, 1859. They purchased a hand pumper from Goodwill Manufacturing on credit, and their name was changed to Goodwill Fire Company, a practice often used by manufacturers in this time period. They began operations in their first firehall built by the PRR for Goodwill at 9th Avenue and 12th Street. A few years later they built their own station at 13th Street and 6th Avenue.

The PRR then organized a small volunteer company to man hand drawn hose carts at the railroad shops mainly located at the site of the Railroaders Museum today.



The ruff and ready men who manned  
the hose carts of the early days

On June 4, 1867, The Altoona Steam Engine Company was organized. They began operations with a horse drawn Amoskeg Steam Pumper, the first in the city, purchased by the PRR. Over the next few years more steam pumpers were purchased by city council and used to organize more volunteer companies throughout the city.

One March 6, 1895, the city council enacted ordinance #595 which created a paid fire department and abolished all the volunteer companies. The equipment which was mostly purchased by city council was moved around until the city was pretty much protected on all sides.

The Altoona Steam Fire Engine Company became the PRR Altoona Works Fire Company and was jointly manned by city firemen and PRR firemen. They continued to use the steam pumper purchased by the PRR as well as a horse drawn hose wagon. The PRR built a station at Chestnut Avenue and 1st Street and it became Station #8 on the city call system.



The horse drawn units in front of the new Station #8



Station #8 Hose Wagon responds to a fire in Altoona passing the Cricket Field along Chestnut Avenue



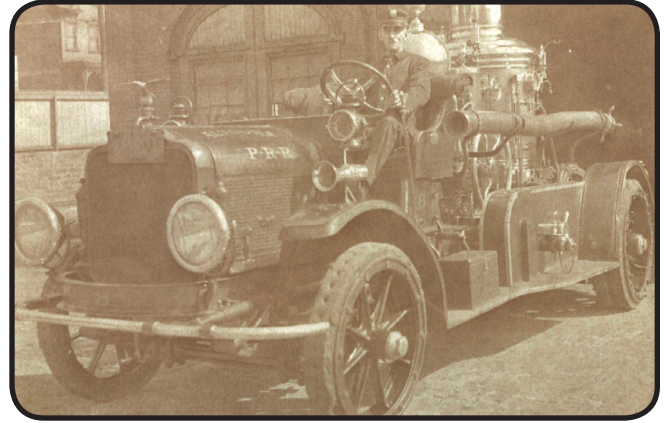
The new 1917 Buick Chemical and Hose Truck at Station #7

The Altoona Works Fire Department was under the direction of W.A. Adams, Chief; and Adam Moss, Foreman. They continued to provide fire protection to the city when called and for many years were partly manned by city fireman also.

In 1918 another Buick Chemical and Hose truck was purchased by the PRR for Station #8. In the early 1920's a White tractor was purchased by the PRR and the steam pumper mounted on that chassis. With this the last of the horses was retired.



The 1918 Buick Chemical and Hose truck and the 1923 White placed under the steam engine



The White tractor used to convert steam pumper from horse drawn

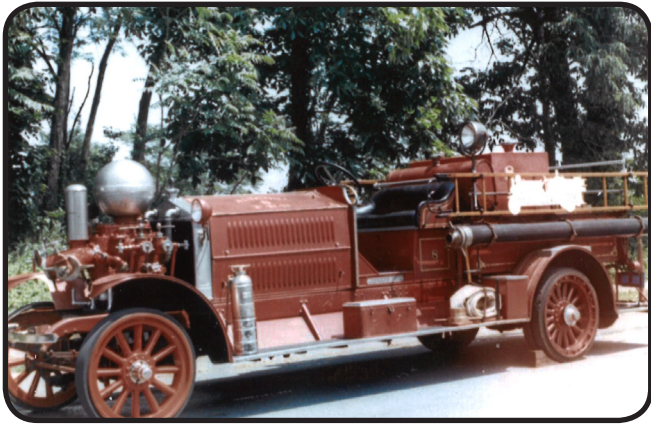
In 1923, the PRR purchased another big engine for the #8 fire company. It was a 1923 Ahrens Fox. It had solid rubber tires and ran for many years in Altoona. At some point in it's career, perhaps after 1941, it was moved to Station #7 and re-numbered. Again later when the PRR shut down the #7 station, it was moved back to #8 and renumbered again.



The Ahrens Fox working at a fire in Downtown Altoona as Number 8



The Ahrens Fox at Station #7 and renumbered in the 1940's.



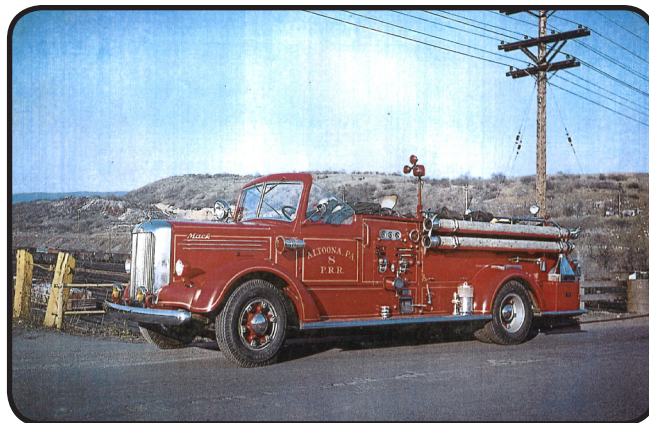
The Fox at Pump Primers show in Harrisburg again with #8 after retirement



Leonard Alwine sits at the wheel of Old #8 at the Fire Museum in Harrisburg

In 1941 the PRR once again purchased a new Mack pumper for Station #8 and the steam pumper, the last one in the city was retired.

Over the next 20 years the city fire department grew in size and began fighting fires at the PRR shops also. After the new Mack arrived the Ahrens Fox was moved to Station #7 until that station was eventually closed.



A 1941 Mack, the last engine purchased by the PRR for #8

The two Buick Chemical Trucks were retired sometime during the 1950's and the Fox was moved back to Station #8 when #7 closed. The Ahrens Fox was retired November 9, 1965 and sold to East Freedom Fire. It eventually ended up at the Fire Museum in Harrisburg still in original paint and letters.

Under Conrail days, the Mack was moved to the 2nd Street shops and then Station #8 was closed. It was also repainted lime yellow to match trends at that time and renumbered Engine #1 since it was the only engine Conrail had in Altoona.



The Mack repainted and in a parade for Juniata's 100th birthday celebration



After repainting it was renumbered Engine #1

The Mack still responded to fires when called, manned by railroad employees. The last fire it worked was the Froshinn Singing Society in 1981. In 1985 it was taken out of service and parked.

In 1991, it was donated to the Altoona Fire Department to be used for fire safety programs. The Altoona Fire Department rebuilt the engine in 1994 and repainted it back to red colors but did not letter it exactly as original. Also, since the AFD had six engines on the roster, this one became engine #7.



The Mack repainted and now serving as Engine #7 in the Altoona Fire Department.

Today in 2018, two veterans of the PRR Altoona Works Fire Department still survive, one in original condition in Harrisburg and one rebuilt here in Altoona. That is really quite a feat for this small fire department from the industrial age of Altoona Past.

## A LOOK BACK

In keeping with the 50th Anniversary theme for the year, we will once again take a look back at events and scenes from the Altoona Area that took place years ago to refresh our memories.

25 years ago

The high speed German built Inner City Express (ICE) train was being tested by Amtrak and passed by the Horseshoe Curve and stopped at the Altoona Station August 7, 1993.



ICE Train rounding the Curve

50 years ago

The Allied Salvage Company of Pittsburgh was given a contract to raise the former Logan Valley office building at 11th Street and 12th Avenue.



Logan Valley Office being raised

75 years ago

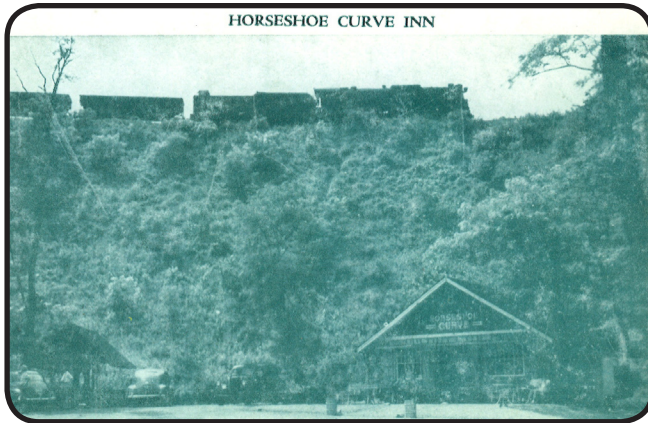
A scene from the Rose Tower in Juniata would have looked like this with the old red bridge (8th Street) a Logan Valley trolley, a steam engine and caboose from the PRR. All these items are now gone including the tower.



A late 1940's scene at Juniata

75 years ago

A postcard view of the Horseshoe Curve with the original building or rest house at the bottom and a steam train at track level rounding the curve for Altoona.



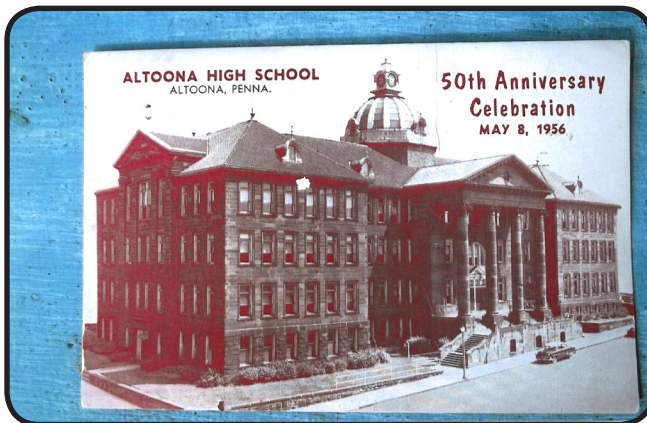
Old postcard view of the Curve

75 years ago

The Altoona Shops were given an order to build 215 new 21,000 gallon tenders for use with it's M-1 Steam Engines.

100 years ago

Over 100 years ago the Altoona High School brownstone was built and the school produced a postcard for it's 50th Anniversary Celebration on May 8, 1956. This building is long gone today.



Postcard for the 50th Anniversary of Altoona High

## LOCAL YARD NEWS

This Editor has been going to Firemen's Convention Parades for more than 60 years with my dad. But this year is the first time that I can say that a steam locomotive was sort of a part of the parade.

In August the Grand Convention Parade of the Central District Volunteer Firemen's Association was held in East Freedom, PA on Old Route 220 near the Everett Railroad track (about 15 feet away). About the middle of the parade, Everett Engine #11 went slowly up the tracks from Hollidaysburg through East Freedom to it's Claysburg shop. It kept blowing it's whistle to get people watching the parade who were actually sitting on the railroad tracks to move. It was a unique experience to behold.

Later that night when the parade awards were given out, Engine #11 was given the "Special Judges Award". This is usually given to a unit or group in the line of march selected by the judges as most unique or best in the parade. Who says a steam locomotive can't be in a parade?



Photo of #11 passing through East Freedom during the parade.

# CHRISTMAS DINNER

The Annual Christmas Dinner for the  
Horseshoe Curve Chapter, National Railway Historical Society is

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2018**

**6:00 P.M.**

**GEESEYTOWN FIRE HALL**



**\$20 per person**



Please RSVP to Frank Givler by November 30th at  
943-4942 (between 7:30 am to 4:30 pm, Mon. - Fri.) or at 931-9628 (cell)

***PLEASE BRING SOMETHING FOR SNOW & TELL***

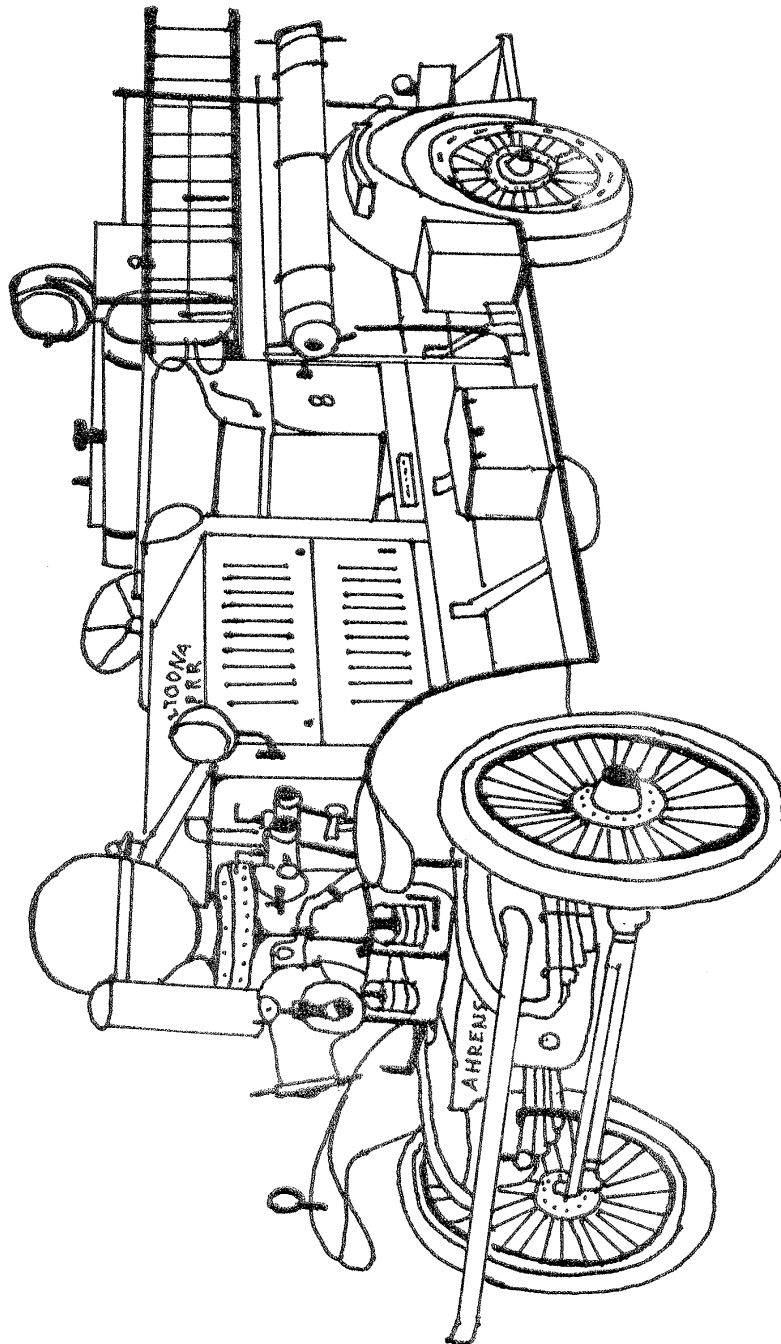
Holland Bros. Meats will cater the dinner, the menu will be roast beef, turkey, gravy, potatoes, stuffing, and corn. Desserts will also be available. The guest speaker will be Kevin Moore, the owner of the private car Berlin. Members can bring items for display in the show and tell tables. There will be no meeting held in December due to the Christmas party that month.

There are still about 40 Chapter History books left. They would make a great Christmas present for one of your railroad friends. Think about giving one to that friend and helping the Chapter finish off this project. They are available from Frank Givler.

At the October meeting of the Chapter, nominations for officers for 2019 were opened. Those nominated so far include:

President	Frank Givler
Vice President	Joe DeFrancesco
Secretary	Joe Harella
Treasurer	Denny Walls
Historian/Editor	Leonard Alwine

The November meeting will be a film night held in the theatre room of the museum. Old PRR films are scheduled to be shown by Joe DeFrancesco. Coffee and donuts will be served.



1923 Ahrens-Fox NS-4  
David C. Buskey  
Harrisburg, Pa.