



Official Newsletter
of



NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P. O. Box 1361

Altoona, PA 16603-1361

www.hscnrhs.org

Summer 2026

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NOTE: The Horseshoe Curve Chapter N R H S was granted a charter May 11, 1968 three months and ten days after the Penn Central merger. The chapter evolved from the Altoona Railway Museum Club of 1965-1968.

The chapter meets the forth Tuesday of each month at 6:00 P.M. In the odd months the members meet at Perkins Family Resturant, and in the even months at the Railroader Museum (ARMM). The chapter does not hold a meeting in December, but instead holds a Christmas party, location to be announced.

90(+) % of all communications and notices are handled by e-mail. So Please keep your e-mail address current.

IN THIS SUMMER ISSUE 2026

After a major change for the Spring issue, a few minor glitches cropped up which were quickly corrected. Hopefully we can now move on and keep the Coal Bucket moving forward. Thanks to all the members and staff who helped us through this transition.

Editor, Len Alwine.

For this issue it will be another "big" issue as we continue to finish off articles started over the winter months. The line up will be:

1. **TO THE RAILS** by Len Alwine

An article about railroads using buses to bring riders to the trains.

2. **NO RAILS AT ALL** by Len Alwine

An article discovered while researching information for the above article about buses to the rails about a Auto-Bus company from Pennsylvania which competed with the Auto Train.

3. **LARRY GOES TO THE CIRCUS** by Len Alwine

An account about a special trip and honor for member Larry McKee.

4. **WHICH WAY ARE YOU GOING?** by Len Alwine

A short story about doubled ended Shrine vehicles.

5. **LOCAL YARD NEWS AND CHAPTER MINUTES** by Joe Harrella

A report on the new 100 foot flag pole at the curve and up coming lectures and local events. Also the "BIG" changes on the Big Boy trip through Altoona. and A LITTLE "BIG BOY" Engine by Len Alwine a story of a model Big Boy.

6. **IN MEMORY**

Honoring Peggy Fields a local women who devoted her life to preserving local history and Ron Hammond a life member of ARMM and a preservationist of local history and buildings related to the rail road.

7. **A LOOK BACK** by Len Alwine

An article chronicling the rail history from Penn Central days to the present N.S. system

Hope all enjoy reading this newsletter. Let us know and also if you have any articles for future editions send them in.

The Coal Bucket Staff.

TO THE RAILS

by Leonard Alwine

An interesting item about "old" railroads which is still used today by Amtrak, was to substitute buses for trips to major people destinations from the rail tracks and stations. It was cheaper and quicker then to build rail right of ways. These buses were owned and or leased by the railroads.

Perhaps the earliest and most "like" a railroad was the Baltimore & Ohio built in 1926. They actually built a turntable in the 42nd street terminal so that buses could be rotated and not have to back out of the terminal building.



Turn table at the 42nd street B & O Train Connection showing two Yellow Type Y buses from 1926.

The B & O operated a rather large fleet of buses from Brooklyn to and from the terminal. The last of these buses was used April 26, 1958 when the B & O stopped all passenger service.

Below left: B & O White 684 buses of 1936 vintage of which they used 30 in the train connection service.

Below right: During the last years of the B & O Train connection services, 30 new White 1136 buses were purchased and used from 1950 until the end in 1958.



TO THE RAILS

by Leonard Alwine

Other railroads copying these same features were the Chiago, Auroa & Elgin from Wheaton Illinios who used Yellow Type Y buses (below left) in the early 1920's to move passengers from the new station and back. Another rail line was the St. Louis Southwestern Railway known as the Cotton Belt, used streamlined 1935 White buses (below right) for this kind of train connection service. They were later replaced by Reo buses.



Other railroads using this service were the Rio Grande using streamlined Whites (below left) in the 1930's and the Union Pacific which used modern GMC PD 4101 buses of 1949 vintage from it's East Los Angles station (below right).



Perhaps the largest special built bus for this service were the tractor trailer buses built by Kaiser and known as the Victory Liners of WWII vintage used by the Santa Fe to haul workers to and from Douglas and Lockheed defense plants from their Central Los Angles station. These buses could haul 117 passengers each.



TO THE RAILS

by Leonard Alwine

As this type of service continued, more modern buses were used by the railroads. The Baltimore & Annapolis Railroad used a GMC P8M4905 in 1981 (below left) and the Bangor & Aroostook Railroad used a GMC PD4905 in 1974 (below center) and the Canadian National also operated GMC buses in Newfoundland in the early 1960's (below right)



With costs raising and more people turning to private cars, a lot of these buses were downsized. In 1972 the Canadian Pacific began using GM transit buses in Montreal (below left), These were GM TH 3502 transit type buses. Also the Rio Grande and Santa Fe railroads began using plain Ford School buses for this rail connection service in the 1960's and 1970's (below center) and (below right).



Then as time went on in the years after Amtrak was formed from 1985 till now all types of modern GM buses and Motor Coach Industry (MCI) have been used for the "Train Connection" services to and from their trains. Again these were not buses used to replace broken down trains, but a fleet of buses to get people from and to Amtrak stations in larger cities



Amtrak bus used in New York

Amtrak bus stop sign

Service in Van Nuys provided by an MC-8

TO THE RAILS

by Leonard Alwine



An MC-8 crosses Santa Fe tracks at the Bakersfield station in California.



A GMC P8M4905A of 1987 vintage in San Jose Amtrak station California



Service from Penn Station and Grand Central Station Is provided by a GM S8M-5304A in New York City.

An interesting story of how railroads used a competing form of transportation (buses) to get passengers on and off their trains.

**Santa Fe
TRAILWAYS**

FIRST AGAIN!

**WITH THE NEWEST AND FINEST
IN HIGHWAY TRANSPORTATION!**

LOOK AT THESE LOW
ONE WAY PRICES

CHICAGO	\$36.85
NEW YORK	45.25
OKLAHOMA CITY	26.15
LITTLE ROCK	31.90
SAN FRANCISCO	5.80
WICHITA	26.15

(Plus Tax)
Savings on Round Trip Fares

First with Air-Conditioning, first with true bus-rail coordination, first with 117-passenger bus for war-workers, Santa Fe Trailways now introduces the first radically new and different, luxury-type, highway coach of the post-war era. Built by Kaiser, this wonderful new bus boasts more startling innovations in bus design than any heretofore developed. These new buses are being put into operation in California in regular Santa Fe Trailways service out of Los Angeles.

Whenever you travel, look first to Santa Fe Trailways because Santa Fe Trailways will always be first with the finest in highway transportation for you!

**SANTA FE TRAILWAYS
BUS DEPOT**
3834 7TH ST. Phone: 5211 or 2020
J. E. MURATET, Agent

**Santa Fe
TRAILWAYS**

This articulated Kaiser bus was operated by Santa Fe Trailways between Los Angeles and the train at Bakersfield.

NO RAILS AT ALL

by Leonard Alwine

While doing research for the rail/bus connection article, I came across an article about a bus service I did not know existed. And it was from right here in Pennsylvania. It was really in competition with the Auto Train. It was called Auto Bus.



Ad for the service

It operated from its homebase in Hazleton to Orlando Florida. Owner Ed Deets began in 1974 with one bus and one tractor trailer car hauler. By 1984, he was using over 50 buses and trucks. Most of the buses were newer MC-9's which were very plush inside. They were hauling over 10,000 passengers per year.

The passengers were charged \$388.00 per car/driver and an additional \$91.00 per car passenger. There was one stop halfway there using first class hotels included in the price. Passengers were allowed to take an overnight bag with them for that stop.

The cars hauled had to only have a ½ tank of gas to prevent spilling from the slopes of the car trailers. Also up to 200 lbs of baggage could be left in the cars, but passengers could not access it during the trip.

Upon arrival, workers unloaded the cars and washed them before turning them over to the owners. Trips ran both ways with several running at the same time.



A driver helps passengers aboard a MC-8 while enroute.



One of the 20 new MC-9s placed in service in 1984.

Just another interesting story from right here in Pennsylvania's past.

LARRY GOES TO THE CIRCUS

by Leonard Alwine

Chapter member Larry McKee was concerned that he would not get to go to the circus this year. It really means a lot to him as he is president of the Circus Fans of America local Pennsylvania tent.

John Fischer made some arrangements with the nursing home and he and member Len Alwine picked Larry up there at 5:30 April 16th. for this special outing. Larry was excited and waiting in his wheel chair. We got him into the car and put his wheel chair in the trunk. Once at the Jaffa we got him back into his wheel chair and pushed him in to our seats.

We then met some members and the president of the Circus Fans of America Baltimore Maryland tent. Their president Pat Stevenson is now in a wheel chair also awaiting a hip replacement in early May. They told us that they may not be back up for the annual memorial service at the monument in Vail which they always attend.



Sitting at the circus (l to R) front Larry McKee President of local tent in Pa. and Pat Stevenson President of Baltimore Maryland tent. Back row (L to R) John Fischer, Len Alwine, Tom Stevenson, Jim Shores.

Larry enjoyed the circus and especially the large jumbo hot dog we got him which he had been talking about for weeks and looking forward to. We also got him a Nachos and Cheese and a Pepsi drink which he enjoyed also.

During the second half of the show, Ring Master Billy Martin came over and had the spotlight put on Larry and Pat and told all what these fans did to promote the circus as he introduced them. The whole crowd gave them a standing ovation.

After the show, Billy Martin came back over and talked to Larry a while and then walked out of the Jaffa with Larry.

We got Larry back into the car (it was now raining) and back to the nursing home a bit late and somewhat damp. The nurses said that they would get him dried off and ready for bed.

You could tell by the look on his face that he was truly happy and enjoyed this special outing.

LARRY GOES TO THE CIRCUS

by Leonard Alwine



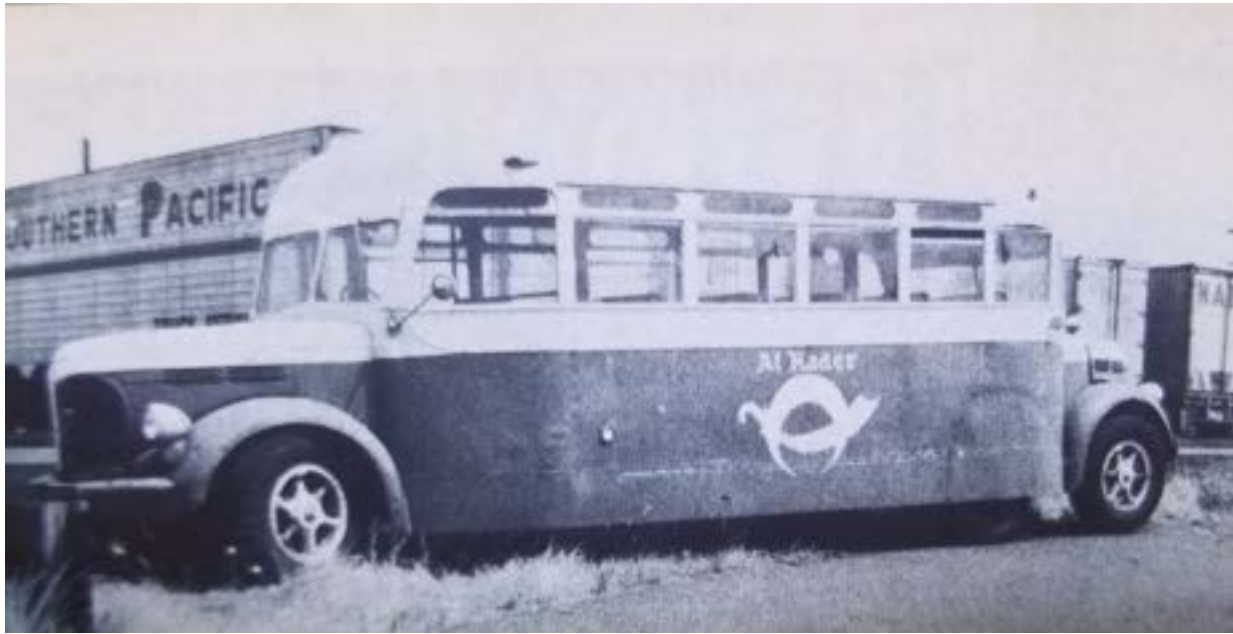
Larry, John, & Lenny at circus 4-16-26 with Larry's spinning toy.



Billy Martin ring master & Larry after the special introduction spotlight 4-16-26

WHICH WAY ARE YOU GOING?

by Leonard Alwine



We won't go so far as to say that the Al Kader Chapter of the Shriners doesn't know whether they were coming or going, but this fanciful rebuild of a Small Reo Bus must have caused quite a sensation wherever it went.



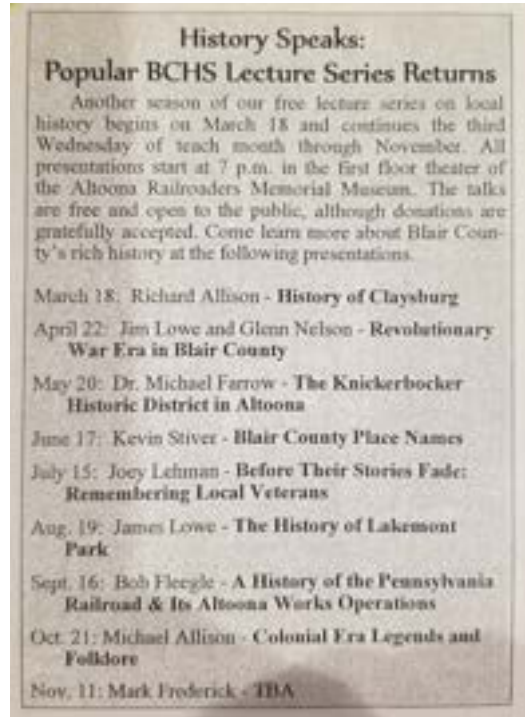
Not to be outdone, the Jaffa Shrine in Altoona Pa. also has a "double" car. It is a 1950's Studebaker which was originally built by Hecker Motors in Hollidaysburg Pa. It eventually ended up at the Jaffa clown unit and was repainted and travels in parades with the clown unit. This photo shows it at the Jaffa Circus held in April 2026.

LOCAL YARD NEWS & CHAPTER MINUTES

by JOE HARELLA

The BIG news is that the Big Boy Locomotive will be at the Everett Railroad in mid July on it's way back from the July 4th celebration held in Philadelphia celebrating the nations 250th birthday.

The BCHS will continue to hold it's Lecture Series at ARMM on the 3rd Wednesday of each month beginning at 7 P.M. in the theater room. See Schedule of topics and speakers below.



The Horseshoe Curve will begin to be open in early May and will host events with the ARMM and twilight nights at the curve all summer and fall.



Due to logistics, if Big Boy stopped in Hollidaysburg, that would have caused the Everett Railroad to cancel excursion trains. Now that Big Boy's stop will be based in Altoona, that frees up the tracks for those excursion trains, thus drawing in visitors.

LOCAL YARD NEWS & CHAPTER MINUTES

by JOE HARELLA

Changes at the curve.

Joe DeFrancesco said that the new flag pole is installed and that a dedication will be held at a later date.

Also that the trees have been trimmed to better see the curve. Security will limit those attempting to get around the curve that day. Only way to get there will be to hold one of the 2000 tickets (sold out) and use the shuttle buses from ARMM parking lot.

NEW BIG BOY SCHEDULE MAY 2026

Local schedule

Big Boy will begin its East Coast tour on May 25 from Cheyenne, Wyoming, and will be in Philadelphia for Independence Day celebrations.

On Wednesday, July 8, it will leave Enola at 9 a.m. and arrive at the Lewistown Station about 12:45 p.m. After a brief stop, Big Boy will steam toward Altoona, passing through Huntingdon and Tyrone, arriving at 5:15 p.m. at the Railroaders Memorial Museum.

The locomotive will depart the museum at 5:45 p.m. for a private Norfolk Southern employee event.

On July 9–10, Big Boy will be on display, with free admission, from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. There will be shuttle runs from Peoples Natural Gas Field to the display area. No parking will be available at the display site and visitors will need to use the shuttles to ensure entrance to the site, according to a news release.

Big Boy will depart Altoona at 9 a.m. Saturday, July 11, and arrive at the Horseshoe Curve National Historic Site about 9:30 a.m., departing at 10 a.m. and heading toward the Cresson Railroad Park.

The locomotive is expected to arrive in Cresson at 10:45 a.m. and depart at 11:15 a.m. for Loretto, Pa., where it is expected to arrive at 5:45 p.m. and depart at 6:15 p.m. for its next stop in Conway, Ohio, as it heads back across the United States.

LOCAL YARD NEWS & CHAPTER MINUTES

by JOE HARELLA

HORSESHOE CURVE CHAPTER NRHS

REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING

MARCH 24TH, 2026

The regular monthly meeting of the Horseshoe Curve Chapter NRHS was held on March 24th, 2026. The meeting was called to order by Vice-president Ron Givler at 6:12 P.M.. The meeting was held at Perkin's Family Restaurant.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved by Ralph Simpson, second by Denny Walls. The motion passed.

The financial statements were read by Treasurer Denny Walls. Denny Haire made a motion to accept the financial report, Ralph Simpson second. The motion passed.

Our meeting then went into a brief recess at 6:18 P.M. as our dinners were being served. As we finished up our meal, the meeting resumed at 6:58 P.M..

OLD BUSINESS

Coal Bucket — Len Alwine informed everyone that the current coal bucket has a new look. It was just sent out yesterday by Jeff Holland. There are only four members receiving it in the mail. A discussion was held regarding our dwindling numbers. One reason could be the lack of interest. It was noted that we don't do very much in the way of attracting new members. We need some new ideas. Len also said that he stopped in the museum and spoke to Joe Defrancesco. Len said that he pointed out some things that should be changed at the museum.

Letter from Penn State — A letter was received from Penn State thanking us for our scholarship program. The letter was written by Sawyer Pedersen who happens to be a recipient of our program. In his letter to us Sawyer expressed how excited he was to be chosen for the award, and how financially it will take some of the worries off his shoulders. Sawyer's interests lie mainly with management and engineering aspects of railroading. He said that he is truly honored to receive the scholarship and once again is very thankful.

NEW BUSINESS

Meeting Location — Vice-president Ron Givler informed everyone that our meeting on April 28th will be held at the Railroader's Memorial Museum at 6:00 P.M.. We will be watching a film on the Red Arrow.

Ralph Simpson then made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Dan Summers second, the meeting was adjourned at 7:18 P.M, with 17 members present.

LOCAL YARD NEWS & CHAPTER MINUTES

by JOE HARELLA

HORSESHOE CURVE CHAPTER NRHS

REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING

APRIL 28TH, 2026

Pres. Givler began the meeting at 6:00 P.M.. Due to this meeting being a social meeting, all chapter business was suspended until the May 26th meeting.

The Executive Director of the museum, Joe Defrancesco, then gave us some information regarding the "BIG BOY" steam locomotive and its' stop and layover in Altoona. Joe said that they are still looking for volunteers to work crowd control at the Horseshoe Curve on Saturday July 12th.

We were then treated to the film "THE WRECK OF THE RED ARROW". The movie was very interesting and very informative. It lasted about one and a half hours long. We then held a short comment session and shortly there after the meeting was adjourned with 12 members present.

A LITTLE "BIG BOY" ENGINE

By Len Alwine

Back in my early days of model railroading, a company called Associated Hobby Manufacturing Inc. (AHM) from Philadelphia Pa. imported Big Boy item number 5114-B from Rivarossi in Italy where it was manufactured in plastic and metal parts.

I purchased the HO scale engine from them (AHM) in June 20, 1971 for \$19.99 and \$2.50 shipping. Times have changed in the model pricing area. It is no longer an affordable hobby!!

L. Alwine, Editor



A LOOK BACK

by Len Alwine



On April 1, 1976, the Penn Central was a combination of the Pennsylvania and New York Central Railroad and six other lesser railroads were made into Conrail at one minute after midnight. The color blue would now run on the rails.

85 years ago 1941--

Jack Dempsi toured with the Cole Bros. circus and he and his family lived on the Loretto, a private car owned by Charles Swab Estate.

50 years ago 1975

Cloyd Benden 80 years old from Gallitzin was interviewed by James Shafer of the Altoona Mirror about the Glen White mining town above the Horseshoe Curve. He said that there were several business, 29 houses, and 85 coke ovens and a school with 34 children attending.

25 years ago 2001

After voting against it twice, Gallitzin Boro Council voted 4 to 3 to install decorative lights on the bridge over the NS tracks at a cost of \$1.8 million using 80% federal funds, 15% state and 5% local funding.

25 years ago 1998

American Track Systems located in the Juniata shops of Conrail declared bankruptcy still owing Conrail \$170,000 in rent. Judge Norman Gallan Gave Conrail permission to evict them.

25 years ago 1998

Conrail officially ceased to exist at 12:01 as Norfolk and CSX railroads gained control of their stock. August 22, 1998.

IN MEMORY

Margaret Peggy Fields passed away at the age of 97 3-16-26. Although not a chapter member she was well known for her local work in preserving history. May you rest in peace Peggy.

Ronald Ron Hammond passed away 3-27-26 at the age of 75. He was a lifetime member of ARMM and for past 25 years managed the old trainmens hall which he converted into apartments with his partner Charlene.

May you rest in peace Ron.

**Margaret L.
'Peggy' Fields**

Jan. 14, 1929 - March 16, 2026
Margaret L. "Peggy" Fields, 97, Altoona, passed away Monday. She was born in Altoona, daughter of the late John Wilson and Leona L. (Schwartz) Stoner. Peggy married Charles L. Fields Jr., who preceded her in death.



Fields

She is survived by a daughter, Linda K. Kirk and husband, Millard, of Apopka, Fla.; a granddaughter, Sondra K. O'Steen and husband, Thomas, of Jacksonville, Fla.; a sister, Sandra Harkreader and husband, Jim, in Arkansas; and two nieces, Laura Sink in Arkansas and Lisa Cave in Tennessee.

Peggy was a 1946 graduate of Altoona High School. She worked for Bell Telephone as a telephone operator.

She volunteered at Fort Roberdeau, Blair County Historical Society and the Quaint Corner Children's Museum; she served on the board of directors for all.

Arrangements are by **Mauk & Yates Funeral Home Inc.**, Altoona.

A private burial will be held at the convenience of the family at Alto-Reste Park.

maukandyates.com

**Ronald Lynn
'Ron' Hammond**

Jan. 17, 1951 - March 27, 2026
Ronald Lynn "Ron" Hammond, 75, of Altoona, entered into eternal rest March 27, 2026, at his home, surrounded by his family in Cape Coral, Fla. Ronald was born in Altoona, to the late Mary E. (Ritnick) and Edwin J. Hammond.



Hammond

In addition to his parents, Ronald was preceded in death by his wife, Jeanie (Bender) Hammond, who passed Jan. 22, 1996.

Ronald is survived by his loving partner, Charlene Beckwith, of Altoona; his stepchildren: Donette (Rob) Speck of Mill Creek, Nicole (Nick) Washburn of Bokoella, Fla., Justin (Danna) Harkleroad of Little Elm, Texas, and Kanan (Natalie) Harkleroad of Oklahoma City, Okla.; his grandchildren: Xaviadre (Amanda) Walters of Ocala, Fla., Sutton and Michael Speck of Mill Creek; his brother, Harold Hammond, of Huntington; and countless other beloved family and friends.

Ron was Catholic by faith throughout his life.

He graduated from Tyrone Senior High School before attending Penn State University, studying industrial arts and teaching and education.

After graduating from PSU in 1973, he went on to work for Raybestos of Manhattan as an engineer before following his passion of becoming a school teacher. He worked for Penn Cambria School District until his retirement in 2006. Ron loved teaching and interacting with all the students.

For the past 25 years, he

and his partner Charlene owned, managed and renovated Trainmens Hall Apartments, taking pride in providing a welcoming home for their tenants.

Ron was a member of the Penn State Alumni Association and a lifetime member of the Altoona Railroad Museum.

He loved spending his free time with his family, woodworking, gardening, and of course, his love for trains.

Friends and family will be received from 1 to 9 p.m. Monday, April 6, 2026, at **Santella Funeral Home**, 1106 Eighth Ave., Altoona, with a prayer vigil at 7 p.m.

A funeral service will be held at 10:30 a.m. Tuesday, April 7, 2026, at the funeral home. Interment will immediately follow at Logan Valley Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions can be sent in Ron's name to Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, 806 11th St., Altoona, PA 16802.

santellafuneralhome.com