

Official Newsletter
of



NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P. O. Box 1361
Altoona, PA 16603-1361
www.hscnrhs.org

Winter 2022

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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 10 days after the PRR-NYC merger), evolving from the Altoona Railway Museum Club (1965-1968). We meet on the **FOURTH** Tuesday of each month except December, at the Railroaders Memorial Museum, Altoona, PA, at 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 President and the Chapter Historian/Editor.

IN THIS WINTER ISSUE DECEMBER 2022

In this issue we will take a look at some of the railcars at the Altoona Railroaders Memorial Museum that were “de-accessioned” recently in the first article by Editor Leonard Alwine. He will also have a short history on Christmas trees since it is Christmas time in the next article.

Then, a brief report on the Chapter’s Christmas Party this year. Followed by Joe Harella again keeping us updated on Local Yard News and chapter meeting minutes.

President Frank Givler reports on NRHS changes in the Interchange Track column and also teams up with the Editor in a short Under The Wire column.

Editor Leonard Alwine writes an article on a couple of old industrial railroads in Blair County.

Next, is a special “In Memory” article about the Duquesne. Followed by a special Christmas “Look Back”.

It has been a different and difficult year for our membership and chapter. Hopefully next year, 2023, will be much better.

At this time the Editor wants to thank all those who have written articles for the Coal Bucket this past year. It has helped to make full newsletters and hopefully they were more interesting to our readers.

The staff of the Coal Bucket wishes all a happy holiday season.

Merry Christmas to all, and to all a good night!



Downtown 11th Avenue in Altoona looking towards Gable’s Department Store during the Christmas Season 1965.

DE-ACCESSION - NOW THAT IS A BIG WORD

by Leonard Alwine

Sometimes you read or hear something that you are pretty sure you know what it means but you want to find out if you are right.

A recent “oops” at the ARMM while scrapping the car “Birch Rivers” resulted with that big word used in the newspaper account of the accidental catching fire of this car during Fire Prevention of all times.



The Birch Rivers, a 1949 Pullman sleeper
being scrapped at the ARMM
in October 2022.

I was pretty sure that I knew what that big word meant but I wanted to educate myself so I looked it up in two dictionaries I have at home, but could not find it there. So I went to the library and looked in their 18 inch square, 4 inch thick dictionary and could not find it there either. The librarian then looked it up on a computer for me, so WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

“To officially remove (an item) from the listed holdings of a library, museum, or art gallery, typically in order to sell it to raise funds.”

Well, I now know for sure what that big words means, but somehow it seemed to be a little misused about those cars now bring scrapped by the museum unless the ARMM is going to sell the scrap metal from the cars for a lot more than it is costing to scrap them! At least I was now educated as to what “de-accession” really means doing that to these cars will help to clean up the yard area.

So how does a railroad museum get to the point when de-accession becomes the word of the day? I believe that it comes from taking in too many old railroad cars and engines that just can’t really be saved.

No matter what their history, if they are badly deteriorated when they arrive, then are left outside in the weather for 20 plus years where mother nature continues to rust and rot them and the summer sun burns off the paint and roof sealer, they will get to the point of “no saving them”.

It is a shame, but it does happen. And really visitors do not want to pay admission to see cars and engines that are just junk and view passenger cars that they cannot enter because they do not have safe floors in them.

Sadly, at one time someone or a group worked hard to acquire them and get them moved to the ARMM with high hopes of restoration. But, with only so much money and volunteer labor, many of these cars were doomed from the start.

It would be nice if a list of all these examples of cars and engines meeting this same fate and photos of them were put into a binder and displayed on a table inside the museum for visitors to see. That would bring some honor to those who have worked to get them donated in the beginning.

Sadly, the person who would have remembered all those de-accessioned examples and would have most likely had photos of them is the late David Seidel.

Perhaps if all the NRHS members and museum members would try to come up with a list of this equipment and search through their old photos, this could still be a viable option for all the de-accession rail equipment from the ARMM's past.

It will take a lot of work, but it is a project that should be done.

Yes, de-accession is a big word, but also a much kinder word than scrapping.



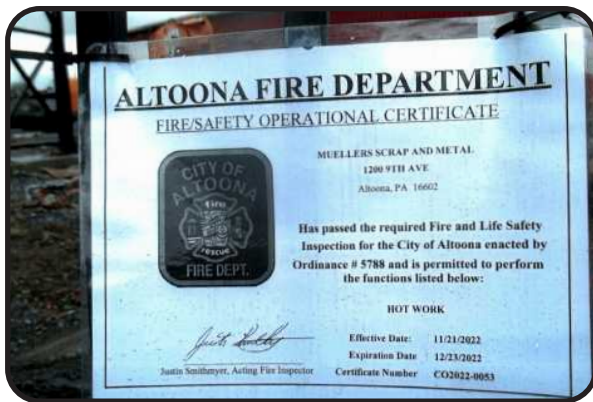
A New York Central Elkhart
250 ton industrial Brownhorst crane
and boom car built in 1948.



The cranes boom car.



PRR Business Car #7511, the Duquesne was
built in the Altoona Car Shop in 192,9.
This car was previously owned by the
Horseshoe Curve Chapter NRHS.



After getting a permit following the fire, scrapping continued at ARMM.



The Duquesne car #7511 on November 25, 2022.

DECORATING THE CHRISTMAS TREE

by Leonard Alwine

As people get ready to celebrate Christmas, the most used “symbol” of Christmas is the Christmas tree. People put them up in homes, businesses, parks, almost anywhere and then decorate them with different themes. But the one thing that they all seem to have is the string of lights, making them seem to come to life.

The tradition of putting up a tree in a house and decorating it began in Germany in the 1500’s.

In 1882, Edward Johnson, a friend and business partner of the light bulb inventor Thomas Edison, had an idea to put many lights on a string of wire and place them around his Christmas tree. Up until that time people used candles on their trees to light them up and that proved to be a real fire hazard.

So Edward put his newly developed light string on his tree in the front window of his New York City townhouse. People passing by were amazed and the idea took off as a lot of folks wanted them for their trees the next holiday season. A lit up Christmas tree.

Nowadays, almost everyone has lit up tree. Perhaps the biggest is the tree in Rockefeller Center in New York City. This tree is 75 feet in height and is now lit by 50,000 LED lights and a crystal star at the top.

Getting this tree to the site is a lot of work. It takes 7-10 days to cut it down and transport it safely to New York. It then is another 10-14 days to set it up and brace it. Then scaffolds are built around it and the decorating begins. Once done, the scaffolding is removed showing the finished tree.

When Christmas is over, the process is reversed and the tree is taken down. The trunk of the tree is sent to a saw mill and made into lumber. Each piece of lumber is marked as “Rockefeller Center Christmas Tree” and the year that it was there. The stamped wood is then shipped to Habitat For Humanity to be used by them in building homes.

Many homes now have a piece of wood from that Christmas tree as part of their structure. A good way of saving a Norway Spruce for years to come after it’s Christmas heritage.



The tree lit up in New York with 50,000 LED lights and a star.

CHAPTER CHRISTMAS PARTY 2022

by Leonard Alwine

On December 3, 2022, 47 members of the chapter met at the Geeseytown Fire Hall to hold the annual Christmas party. The members met at about 5:00 pm and socialized until 6:00 pm when Vice President Ron Givler got everyone seated and held the supper prayer.

The meal was catered by Holland Brothers and consisted of turkey, roast beef, filling, mashed potatoes, gravy, corn, cole slaw, rolls and butter, coffee, iced tea and apple pie for dessert.

Following the meal, Joe DeFrancesco, Director of the Altoona Railroaders Memorial Museum, was the guest speaker. He shared a power point presentation on the progress made at the museum and the Horseshoe Curve during the past couple years since the covid shutdown.

A lot of change is in progress at the museum which will result in a cleaner looking yard area. Also progress is being made on several cars at the museum and also the K4. New windows and roof have been installed

on the building.

At the Curve, the incline has been rebuilt with new wiring and wheel bearings and is awaiting final inspection to happen so that it can once again be used to take visitors up to the top of the curve.

It was a great presentation and answered many questions asked by members about what is happening at the museum. He spoke for about 1 1/2 hours and closed with a video of the K4 whistle blowing at a recent fundraiser held in Maryland on a train trip.

The members then wished all a Merry Christmas and left for home around 9:00 pm.

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Frank announced that all current officers will hold their positions until the next election to be held in November 2023.



A photo of the “Polar Express” float used in the Christmas Parade on December 1, 2022.

Chapter member John Fisher helped to build this float which was sponsored by the Cathedral Church.

LOCAL YARD NEWS

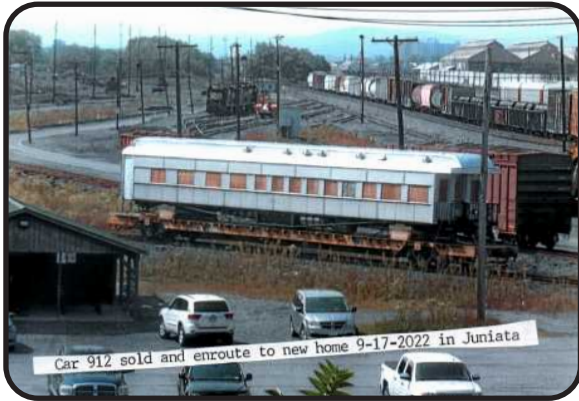
by Joe Harella

The Everett Railroad has recently delivered its first load of steel to the new Rockland Manufacturing’s plant in Greenfield Township near Claysburg. The location of this plant is on the old Harbison Walker Industrial site.

The new business makes steel products from heavy flat steel for construction equipment. They have built the largest dozer blade in the world in the past.

To get car loads of steel to the plant, the Everett Railroad is spending \$332,000.00 in track improvements with 70% of those funds coming from PennDot Rail Freight Assistance Program (according to the Altoona Mirror staff reports).

The Everett Railroad has sold one of its train cars. Car #912 was spotted in Juniata Yards 9-17-2022 aboard a flat car en route to its new home.



Car #912 at Juniata Yards
September 2022



Car #912 when chartered by the Horseshoe
Curve Chapter NRHS during a Pumpkin
Patch train ride October 2018



Chapter members Frank Givler, Dave Behe,
Joe Harella, and Diane Alwine eat lunch
aboard #912 during the trip October 2018.

HORSESHOE CURVE CHAPTER NRHS

REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING

SEPTEMBER 27TH, 2022

The regular monthly meeting of the Horseshoe Curve Chapter NRHS was held on September 27TH, 2022. The meeting was called to order by President Frank Givler at 7:00 P.M.. The meeting was held at Perkins Family Restaurant.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved by Ron Givler, second by Denny Haire. The motion passed.

The financial statements were read by Treasurer Denny Walls. Ralph Simpson made a motion to accept the financial report, Gary Clare second, the motion passed. Denny also informed everyone that the new calendars are here. The price is the same, \$13.00.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Bus Trip To Cumberland- Dick Charlesworth said that everything went real well with the trip, and he was very pleased with the way the Cracker Barrell handled our group. Everyone was served in a timely manner and there were no problems. We had 56 people in our group. Gary Clare commented on how well the trip went also. The \$1,706.77 profit was divided between the chapter and the Alto Model Train Association with the chapter receiving \$953.39. Dick said that he might run another trip in the spring.
2. Updated Report on the Museum- Pres. Givler said that he approached Joe Defrancesco about writing up a report on the museum for Len Alwine to put into the Coal Bucket. Len said that it didn't have to be lengthy, just a paragraph or two to let everyone know what is going on. Look for this updated report in the next Coal Bucket. Len then thanked everyone who contributed something to be put into our news letter.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Pres. Givler said that he received an Email from Joe Defrancesco regarding the museum. Joe said that the repairs on the funicular have been completed and all that remains now is the state inspection. The dormers on the yard side of the building had all new windows installed and the street side will be next. The City Planning Board is currently reviewing the plans for the yard.
2. Christmas Party- Denny Walls said that every Saturday in December is available at the firehall. He also said that he is willing to use his "free" day at the hall should we decide to hold it there, however, we must provide the food. A discussion was held. We decided to hold the party at the fire hall on December 3RD, 2022, at 6:00 P.M..

GENERAL DISCUSSION

1. The Chapter would like to extend our sincere sympathies and condolences to the family of Paul Campbell on his passing.
2. Len Alwine informed everyone that he spotted what turned out to be Alan Maples' office car on a flat car in Juniata. The car was recently sold.
3. Dick Charlesworth informed everyone that the fall train show will be held on November 6TH, 2022, at the convention center.

Ron Givler then made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Ralph Simpson second, the meeting was adjourned at 7:31 P.M.- 25 Members Present.

ATTENDANCE- Ron Givler, Gary Clare, Mary Ann Stanley, George Stanley, Marge Simpson, Ralph Simpson, Don Goebel, Dee, Dean McKnight, Dan Summers, Nancy McKnight, Wil Teeter, Denny Walls, Mike Walls, Dewayne Miller, Denny Haire Diane Haire, Dick Charlesworth, Karin Givler, Frank Givler, Jean Noonan, Zach Noonan, Larry Lear, Len Alwine, Joe Harella

JOSEPH HARELLA
RECORDING SECRETARY
HORSESHOE CURVE CHAPTER NRHS

HORSESHOE CURVE CHAPTER NRHS

REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING

OCTOBER 25TH, 2022

The regular monthly meeting of the Horseshoe Curve Chapter NRHS was held on October 25TH, 2022. The meeting was called to order by Pres. Frank Givler at 6:15 P.M..

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved by Ron Givler, second by Dick Charlesworth, the motion passed.

The financial statements were read by Treasurer Denny Walls. Ralph Simpson made a motion to accept the financial report, Ron Givler second, the motion passed. Denny also informed everyone that he now has the new calendars.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Christmas Party- Our Christmas party will be held on Saturday, December 3RD at 6:00 P.M. at the Geeseytown Firehall. The meal will consist of two meats plus all of the trimmings, including dessert. The cost is \$20.00 per person. Pres. Givler informed everyone that the Executive Director of the Railroaders Memorial Museum, Joe Defrancesco, will be the guest speaker.

We then took a short break from the meeting as our dinners were served and it was time to eat.

2. Penn State Scholarship Fund- Pres. Givler reported that we have approximately \$4000 in the fund. The two latest recipients of the scholarships are Bill Fairy and Kerry Chen.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Discussion on the K-4- The museum has received the steel sheets that once they are put together they will house the firebox. We also discussed the process of riveting the metal sheets together.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

1. Train Show- Dick Charlesworth reported that the next train show will be held on November 6TH at the Convention Center from 9:00 A.M. to 2:00 P.M.. The admission fee is \$5.00.
2. Flash Bulbs- Extra flash bulbs from the 1954 light up of the Horseshoe Curve are available to anyone who would like one.
3. Denny Walls had some booklets and other items for show and tell.

Ron Givler then made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Ralph Simpson second, the meeting was adjourned at 7:39 P.M.- 13 Members Present.

ATTENDANCE- Mary Ann Stanley, George Stanley, Dan Summers, Ron Givler, Wil Teeter, Ralph Simpson, Karin Givler, Frank Givler, Dick Charlesworth, Mike Walls, Denny Walls, Marge Simpson, Joe Harella.

JOSEPH HARELLA
RECORDING SECRETARY
HORSESHOE CURVE CHAPTER NRHS

HORSESHOE CURVE CHAPTER NRHS

REGULAR MONTHLY METING

NOVEMBER 22, 2022

The regular monthly meeting of the Horseshoe Curve Chapter NRHS was held on November 22, 2022. The meeting was called to order by Pres. Frank Givler at 7:12 P.M..

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved by Don Goebel, second by Gary Price, the motion passed.

The financial statements were read by Treasurer Denny Walls. Ralph Simpson made a motion to accept the financial report, Denny Haire second, the motion passed. Denny Walls also reported that his request for the use of the Geeseytown Firehall for our Christmas dinner was approved.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Christmas Party- Pres. Givler reminded everyone that our Christmas party will be held on Saturday, December 3RD at 6:00 P.M. at the Geeseytown Firehall. The cost is \$20.00 per person. He also mentioned that he spoke with Virginia Seidel about coming to the dinner, but she said that it is just too soon for something like this. She was very grateful however for the invitation.
2. Windows for the Duquesne- Since the Duquesne is in the process of being scrapped, we no longer have any use for the replacement windows and we would like to try to sell them if possible. A discussion was held, but there was no mention of what the selling price would be. More on this later.
3. Model Train Show- Denny Haire reported on the train show that was held on Sunday, November 6TH. He said that we had 373 paid admissions giving us a profit of over \$3000.

NEW BUSINESS

1. National Dues-Pres. Givler informed everyone that those interested in joining the National, those dues are now due.
2. Crane Car- The crane car at the museum is now being offered for sale. Anyone that is interested please contact the museum.
3. Penn State Pushing for Donations- Member Nick Martino reported that Penn State is pushing for donations to benefit the Railroader's Memorial Museum. Nick also informed us that he will be receiving two scholarships.
4. Sam Rea Shop- Denny Walls reported that the four buildings of the old wreckshop are being offered, and if there is no interest, they could possibly start using them to repair cars.
5. Horseshoe Curve Chapter Bank Balance- Since we don't have as many fund raisers as we used to, Dick Charlesworth suggested taking some money and investing it in something else to generate more interest. The members then held a discussion. Denny Walls said that he will check on CD's and what ever else the bank has to offer.

GENERAL DISCUSSION-

1. Sylvania Electric- Dick Charlesworth reported that the former Sylvania plant is now being used by a number of businesses. Hertz Car Rental is located in the north end of the first floor, while Amazon occupies the south side. The building is also home to a number of other businesses on the second floor.
2. Ron Givler-Just to let you know Vice-president Ron Givler is recovering from knee surgery and is doing just fine. He'll be ready for the old potato sack race in no time.

3. December Meeting- Pres. Givler reminded everyone that we DO NOT hold a meeting in December.

Don Goebel then made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Ralph Simpson second, the meeting was adjourned at 7:45 P.M.- 18 Members Present.

ATTENDANCE – Don Doebel, Dee Hartman, Dan Summers, Gary Price, Betsie Price, Marge Simpson, Ralph Simpson, Denny Walls, Mike Walls, Dewayne Miller, Denny Haire, Larry Lear, Karin Givler, Frank Givler, Dick Charlesworth, Dana Martion, Nick Martino, Joe Harella

JOSEPH HARELLA
RECORDING SECRETARY
HORSESHOE CURVE CHAPTER NRHS

INTERCHANGE TRACKS **by Frank Givler**

A message from Charles Webb concerning changes in the National NRHS structure.

From Charles Webb
charliew1258@yahoo.com
Subject NRHS National Board (former NRHS District 2 Chapters)
Date Tue, Nov-01-22 1:47:17PM

Good afternoon. I apologize for not writing to your chapter sooner. I want to take this opportunity to thank each of the former National Railway Historical Society District 2 Chapters. As you are most likely aware by law changes last year eliminated the districts within the NRHS and reduced the number of National Directors. This was accomplished to help streamline the NRHS at the National level.

Concurrent to this change my term was expiring as the National Director for NRHS Chapter 2. I had had the honor of serving you since 2016. So, I decided to run for one of the nine National Director positions.

I am truly humbled and honored to have been elected to this new national position. I am certain that I owe much of my election success to the members within the former district 2 and I am grateful for their support.

While there is no longer a "District 2" I want each of you to know that I am but a telephone call or email away with any questions, issues or concerns you may have regarding the NRHS. I also value your suggestions.

Also, I want to stress the importance your chapter's National Advisory Council Representative especially now that the National Board is a much smaller group. The National Advisory Council Representative is either elected by your chapter membership or appointed by your chapter's board of directors. This position is intended to be your chapter's voice to the National Board. It is imperative that we keep the two-way communication going in order to continue to build the NRHS and support our many worthy projects and endeavors.

The National Advisory Council Representative from your chapter should be willing to attend our spring and fall conferences as well as our annual meeting during the convention. This can be accomplished by either attendance in person or by joining the meetings on line. Generally, the Advisory Council meeting is held in the morning of our "meeting day" at these three yearly events. The issues, concerns and suggestions discussed are then packaged and presented at the afternoon National Board of Directors meeting. If the primary National Council Representative cannot attend a meeting someone from your chapter should be appointed to represent your chapter for that meeting.

I cannot stress enough the importance that a capable and committed representative to the National Advisory Council be selected by each chapter. This is the conduit of information between your Chapter and the National and the National to your Chapter.

Additionally, it is extremely important that your chapter's roster of officers be update with National at least once per year. This should occur after your chapter's elections. Names, addresses, email addresses and telephone numbers of each officer are much appreciated. Please send those to me so we can make sure the information is on file.

I close this email by stressing again that I am certainly willing and able to assist you and your chapter with any issues, concerns or suggestions you wish to bring to the National Board of Directors. But we are a much smaller group now and it is essential that your National Advisory Council Representative step up to the plate to ensure your chapter's voice is heard at the national level. Afterall, the National Railway Historical Society is nothing without the strong network of chapters across this great country and internationally. The work that your chapters accomplish, the meetings with great programs and the camaraderie is what keeps the NRHS alive. Thank you for that and thank you for supporting me since 2016.

Sincerely, Charlie Webb, NRHS National Director, 717-817-5183 (charliew1258@yahoo.com)

UNDER THE WIRE



Times Square New Year's Eve 1937

I do not believe that one trolley car would be able to handle the crowd going home later that night.



Frank Givler received this photo of our Walter truck's younger brother. It is a 1951 model operated by the Logan Airport in Boston. It was built to plow snow, lift heavy objects up to ten tons and had a 20 ton winch for pulling disabled objects towards the truck.

VISITING OLD BLAIR COUNTY INDUSTRIAL RAILROADS **by Leonard Alwine**

While going through some of my father's collection of photos, I was able to find a few interesting photos of "old" train tracks and engines from Blair County. Dad always looked for different old stuff at flea markets and took many photos of area trains in his later life. These photos, I am sure, he purchased and I am reproducing them here for our members.

The first two are from the Brook Mills quarry near Claysburg, which dug limestone and clay used in the brick plants in that town. The product was taken down the side of the mountain and then by rail and later trucks to those plants.

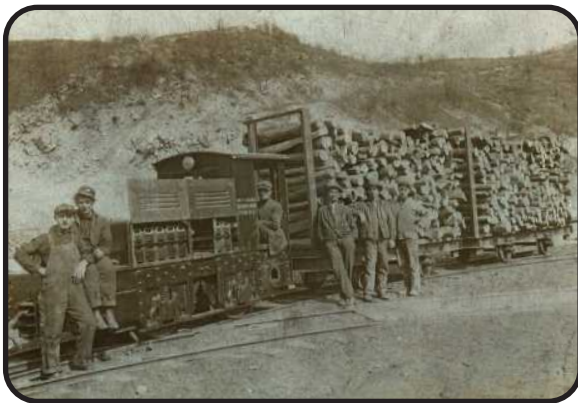


A view of the quarry tracks with loaded cars. Track in the foreground seems to be wyes to get the cars down the mountain.



Photo showing the “tracks” going down the slope around 1900, perhaps still in the building stages.

The second set of photos are from the Tyrone Paper Mill taken in 1912. They show the little trains used at the mill to haul logs around the plant and yard.



1st train with crew (left to right): Jackie Robinson, unknown, Jake Spotts, Unknown, John Waters, and Joe Keys Moving some logs at the mill.

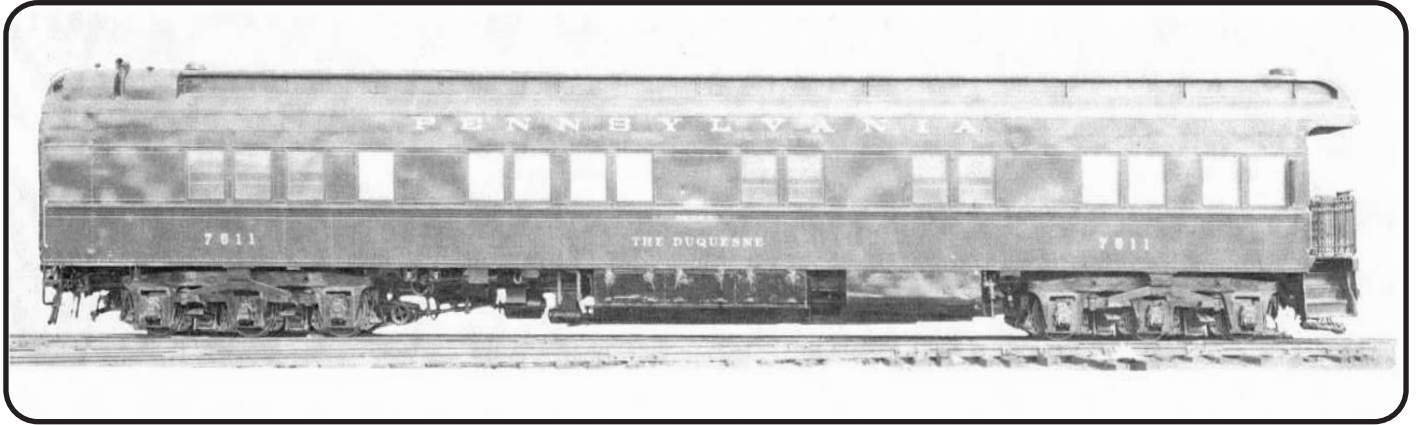


2nd engine with Engineer Harry Irvin and brakeman Carl Welsh at the Mill yard in 1912.

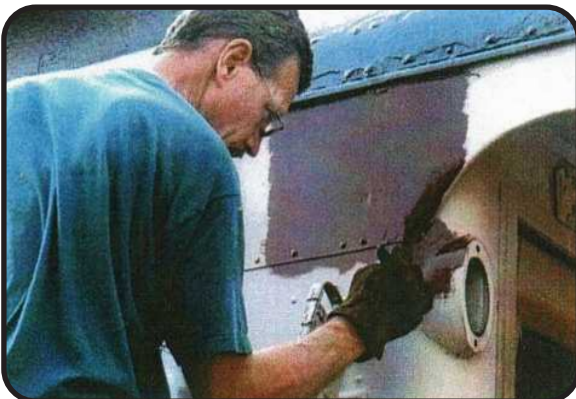
A SPECIAL IN MEMORY

THE DUQUESNE
1929 - 2022

The Duquesne was built in the Altoona Car Shops in 1929 for the Pennsylvania Railroad as an observation car numbered 7511. It ran in PRR passenger consists until 1964 when it was retired.



Upon retirement from passenger service, it was given a yellow painting and used as a work train car into the Penn Central days. In 1993, the car was acquired by the Horseshoe Curve Chapter of the NRHS and moved to the Altoona Railroader's Memorial Museum. In December 2006, it was sent to Union Tank Car Co. (very close to where it was originally built) to be sandblasted and painted grey primer. It was then returned to ARMM, Joe Harella then began replacing the windows and frames of the car and members of the chapter returned it to its original PRR maroon color in June 2007.



In November 2017, the chapter decided to attempt to sell the car since restoration was at a standstill. In the Spring of 2019, a man from Canada showed interest in the car but never followed through with the purchase. In the Spring of 2021, 7511 and several other chapter owned cars were donated to the ARMM.

In the Fall of 2021, the ARMM de-accessioned The Duquesne.

All hope of preserving and restoring the 7511 was lost when the car was brutally crushed and scrapped at the museum yard November 2022, 93 years later and less than one mile from where it was built. Another piece of Altoona's history gone.

May you rest in "pieces" 7511.



The left side of 7511 half crushed at the yard.
November 2022



The right side torn apart and crushed at ARMM.
November 2022

A LOOK BACK "CHRISTMAS SPECIAL" by Leonard Alwine



Advertised for Christmas for the person on your gift list that has everything. The Chia Pet was a trademark of Joseph Enterprises. It really took off in 1982 when it was advertised with a TV jingle.

They can still be found today.

Back in the 1960's, Gable's Department Store in downtown Altoona placed a huge lighted Christmas tree on it's building.

It is rumored that there were only two of these made, one for Macy's New York and this one for Gable's.



The model train races held at ARMM 2018 (from the YMCA days before that)
Left to right:
Justin Noll, Marley Noll, Bill McKinney, and J.C. Orr Sr., Founder of the races.



Three little kids racing their 0-27 gauge train.

A float in the Christmas Parade in Tyrone, PA from the paper mill in that town.
December 1, 1953





A float in the Altoona Christmas Parade
in 1987 from the East End United
Methodist Church.

It won 1st Place Special Judges Award.

