



CINDERS

FEBRUARY 2014



IN THIS ISSUE

New Year Comes in Like a Lion.....	1, 6-8
Philadelphia Chapter Meeting Notice.....	2
PHILADELPHIA EXPRESS, by Frank Tatnall.....	3
Extra List.....	5

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Newsletter of the
PHILADELPHIA CHAPTER
NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.
 Post Office Box 7302
 Philadelphia, PA 19101-7302

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New Year Comes in Like a Lion

Cold, Snow, Ice Hit Rails, Highways, Airlines

December's weather was only a preview of what has become a very hard winter. The New Year roared in like the proverbial lion, spreading misery across a vast sweep of the Northeast, Midwest and South. First, a nor'easter-type storm struck the East Coast in early January, followed by a huge dome of frigid air which meteorologists call a "polar vortex." This Arctic system engulfed the entire region from Montana to Atlanta, bringing heavy snow, howling winds and brutally low temperatures. The Delaware Valley was not spared, suffering a barrage of snow, ice and winds, as the mercury twice dipped into single digits at Philadelphia International Airport. The low of 4 degrees on the morning of January 7 made it the City's coldest day in 20 years. Then, two weeks later, another round of snow and sub-freezing cold inflicted even more pain. Here is a day-by-day account of how the weather affected travel in the local area, starting right after New Year's Day:

FRIDAY, JANUARY 3: In the region's second major snowstorm of the season, up to nine inches of light, powdery snow accompanied by 25-degree temperatures resulted in a miserable morning commute. SEPTA passengers had a tough day on Regional Rail, with more than 400 train delays reported, plus at least 14 annulments mainly on the Warminster, Chestnut Hill East and Airport Lines. Switch failures and equipment problems often were to blame. Bus service was suspended on several routes but the subway and elevated lines ran well for most of the day.

Amtrak had announced on Thursday that it would activate its Severe Weather Command Center in Wilmington, with diesel locomotives and track and electrical maintenance crews spotted at strategic locations along the Northeast Corridor. A reduced, or "modified," schedule for Friday was placed in effect on the Corridor but the storm caused delays to many of the trains that did operate—some of them running two or more hours late. One Acela Express, #2151, arrived in Washington three hours and 17 minutes behind time. Keystone Service to Harrisburg operated on a normal schedule, with some delays. NJ Transit announced that it intended to run regular weekday service, but encountered many

delays on its rail and bus routes. Emergency cross-honoring of tickets between modes was announced. The governors of both New Jersey and New York declared statewide states of emergency due to the storm, a wise move since the brunt of the storm affected areas north of the Philadelphia area. But, in spite of the best efforts of PennDOT, highway travel in the Delaware Valley was severely impacted by the snow, and more than 400 flights were cancelled at the Airport.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 4: This was a sunny, cold day, with a morning low of 8 degrees and a high of 29 in the afternoon. Amtrak restored most of its regularly-scheduled trains on the Corridor, but with delays. SEPTA suffered a disruption when an overhead wire fell during the morning rush on #2 track in the 36th Street tunnel near "Zoo," resulting in a long list of late trains. Another event that morning caused many riders to be late—the breakdown of West-Trenton-bound train #4324 at Market East which had a domino effect of delays and annulments. That evening Warminster train #463 suffered a broken pantograph at Willow Grove, causing a power shutdown and the cancellation of ten later trains. With many roads still snow-covered, highway travel was difficult, but most area malls managed to open by noontime and—despite the cold—the Eagles-New Orleans football game was played that evening at Lincoln Financial Field. It took a large crew to shovel the tons of snow from the seating area and clear the playing field, after which the Eagles lost a close game which added to the misery. All four runways at the Airport were reopened but flight delays persisted. The Philadelphia Streets Department estimated that over the weekend it would use some 10,000 tons of salt.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 5: Icy conditions were found on roads and other surfaces throughout the area, with consequent problems for drivers and pedestrians. Rain that night preceded a warmup on Monday, in this interim period between storms. For a time on Sunday morning, SEPTA lost catenary and signal power at "Kay" interlocking near 30th Street Station, resulting in some 25 train delays and two annulments. (Continued on Page 6)

Meeting Cancellation Notice

In the event of snow, sleet or freezing rain on a Philadelphia Chapter meeting date, Chapter officers will make a decision on whether to hold the meeting as scheduled. If in doubt, members should telephone 215-947-5769 after 12 Noon on the day of the meeting for a recorded advisory. Thank you.

Meeting Notice

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2014

Room 121, Randell Hall (access through Main Hall main entrance, 3141 Chestnut Street – just east of 32nd) Drexel University, (three blocks from Amtrak/SEPTA/NJ Transit 30th Street Station (Easily accessible to all public transportation; at our recent meetings, there has been plenty of parking on Chestnut Street immediately in front of Main Hall – pay at the kiosks)

MEETING START TIME: 7:00 PM

Our meeting on Friday, February 21, 2014 is expected to feature a representative from Hyundai Rotem, whose plant in South Philadelphia has produced the 120 SEPTA Silverliner V railcars, is currently working on 75 double-deck commuter rail coaches for Boston's MBTA, and which should shortly be starting production planning on 50-plus Silverliner V-type cars for Denver RTD's East Line between Downtown Denver and Denver International Airport. Final details on this program were not available at presstime due to the continuing winter weather problems in the Philadelphia area. If the Rotem speaker is not able to be with us, there will be an alternative program for your enjoyment.

Membership Renewal Scorecard

As the 2014 membership renewal season winds down, Treasurer Rich Copeland has provided the following numbers to our membership.

As of February 1, 205 full NRHS/Chapter members have renewed. There are a total of 36 full members who have not submitted their dues, and they are reminded that the March issue of *Cinders* will be the last mailed. NRHS during early February will be sending out a "Final Notice" mailing to those unrenewed.

Important Phone Numbers

CINDERS lists below the telephone numbers which should be used to report suspicious sightings, emergencies or other conditions affecting rail operations, including trespassers, vandalism, fires, defective equipment, etc.

AMTRAK	800-331-0008
CSX	800-232-0144
CONRAIL Shared Assets	800-272-0911
NJ TRANSIT (NJ only)	800-242-0236
NORFOLK SOUTHERN	800-453-2530
PATCO Transit	856-963-7995
SEPTA	215-580-8111

IMPORTANT NOTICE!!

If a "red" dot appears on the address label on the envelope which contains this issue of *Cinders*, then your 2004 NRHS/Chapter dues or Philadelphia Railfriends contribution has not been received, as of December 28. Please assist us by checking this today, and contact Editor Larry Eastwood if in error.

NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
PHILADELPHIA CHAPTER, INC.
Post Office Box 7302, Philadelphia, PA 19101-7302

Founded 1936, incorporated 1973 as a 501c3 non-profit corporation

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2014 ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES: \$68.00 per person, which includes National (\$50.00) and Chapter (\$18.00) dues. Additional Chapter membership dues \$18.00 per person per year. Membership applications should be forwarded to: Membership Chair, P. O. Box 7302, Philadelphia, PA 19101-7302. Membership in the parent National Railway Historical Society is required to hold an Additional Chapter membership. Members joining this category are required to furnish Philadelphia Chapter with their home chapter and membership number. *Note: National NRHS dues are increased by \$11.00 for the year 2014.*

Individuals interested in supporting Philadelphia Chapter and its local rail preservation activities may become a part of Philadelphia Railfriends. This non-membership category is available for an annual contribution of \$25.00. Forward remittance, payable to "Philadelphia Chapter, NRHS" to the Chapter's P. O. Box above, indicating it is for "Philadelphia Railfriends".

ADDRESS CHANGES should be sent to the Editor at Post Office Box 353, Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006-0353. **PLEASE INCLUDE YOUR NEW TELEPHONE NUMBER** and E-mail address so our Membership List is complete. We will notify the NRHS National Headquarters of the change.

Cinders is published 11 times a year by Philadelphia Chapter, NRHS, Inc. Correspondence regarding *Cinders* should be directed to the Editor at P.O. Box 353, Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006-0353. **EXCHANGE newsletters should be sent to:** R. L. Eastwood, Jr., Editor, P. O. Box 353, Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006-0353, or by electronic mail to avrestower@comcast.net.

If your *Cinders* is received damaged or incomplete, please contact the Editor at the address above to receive a replacement copy. Requests may also be made by telephone to 215-947-5769, or by E-mail to avrestower@comcast.net.

If your *Cinders* Arrives in Bad Condition

If your *Cinders* arrives damaged or with pages missing, contact Editor Larry Eastwood at 215-947-5769 or avrestower@comcast.net and a replacement copy will be promptly be sent to you.

PHILADELPHIA

EXPRESS



FRANK G. TATNALL, JR.

Editor's Note: Because of the needed preparation time and length of the story on the January weather, Frank Tatnall's column is a bit shorter this month – more coming next issue!

SEPTA TRANSIT



SEPTA's contract with its largest union, Transport Workers Local 234, expires on March 15. Negotiations are underway on a new three-year agreement covering City Transit employees.....With the Legislature's passage of a new transportation funding law (see December *Cinders*) and some cost-cutting, the SEPTA board was able to approve a full-year operating budget of \$1.28 billion for Fiscal Year 2014 extending through the end of June. (Since last summer SEPTA has been running on a series of short-term budgets.) Now SEPTA is working on its operating budget for Fiscal Year 2015 beginning July 1. Public hearings will be held in mid-April, with the Philadelphia sessions scheduled for Wednesday, April 23, beginning at 11 AM and 5 PM at SEPTA headquarters.....On January 30 SEPTA hosted another public meeting to discuss the latest developments in the project to build an extension of the Norristown High Speed Line to King of Prussia (see September *Cinders*). The meeting was held in the Radisson Hotel at Valley Forge.

SEPTA is getting close to publication of an updated Philadelphia Transit & Street Map to replace the 2009-2010 editionSEPTA has joined in issuing a handy tourist guide for Philadelphia's Historic District entitled "Beyond the Bell." It guides visitors to more than 40 cultural attractions within walking distance of the Liberty Bell..... SEPTA again will be offering discounted admissions to the annual Philadelphia Flower Show at the Pennsylvania Convention Center, set for March 1-9. The theme this year is "ARTiculture"As part of its "customer etiquette campaign" SEPTA is using the tagline "Dude it's rude" on transit timetables.



SEPTA REGIONAL RAIL

Comcast announced last month that it will build a second skyscraper in center city. The 1,121-foot-high steel-and-glass tower, costing \$1.2 billion, will be located at 18th & Arch Streets adjacent to Comcast's present building, with a direct underground connection to Suburban Station..... Governor Corbett visited Secane on January 24 to announce that the State's new transportation funding bill will finance the cost of building a new station and expanded parking lot at Secane on the Media-Elwyn line. Also attending the ceremony were State

Transportation Secretary Barry Schoch, SEPTA General Manager Joseph M. Casey and Board Chairman Pasquale T. Deon, Sr., who said that the project marks the first step in SEPTA's effort to replace deteriorating infrastructure around the system. Work on the parking lot will start this year, to be followed in 2015 by construction of a new station, high-level platforms, pedestrian tunnel and improved lighting and signage. Altogether the cost will be about \$22 million. SEPTA plans to award more than \$100 million in contracts for capital improvements this year alone.

SEPTA plans to reissue all Regional Rail timetables in April, together with some reassignment of the push-pull sets. One improvement concurrent with the December timetable change was to begin running a limited number of seven-car trains on the Reading side of the system, in order to relieve overcrowding. Afternoon express #6576 to Doylestown is a prime example. Previously it was believed that such long trains could trip electrical circuits north of the phase break.....*Railpace* reports that the Borough of Lansdale is planning to build a parking garage, apartment buildings and retail space on the site of the Madison parking lot adjacent to SEPTA's station. A parking garage also is planned to replace SEPTA's current lots behind the station, with a pedestrian overpass connecting the two sites. Of SEPTA's 153 Regional Rail stations, Lansdale is 9th in ridership with 2,500 trips each weekday.....In the last week of January SEPTA still held 16 retired Silverliner II and III MU's ready to go to scrap The three original Silverliner V's, #701, 801 and 802, were the entire consist of train #455 at Warminster on Wednesday, January 29. The train had to be annulled due to a problem with the brake system.



SEPTA is in the midst of a weekend track replacement project on the Norristown Line between Conshohocken and Norristown. Beginning last month, shuttle buses were operated on Saturdays and Sundays between those two points. The project is scheduled to resume on the weekend of March 15-16. Because the railroad through Norristown was out of service, NORFOLK SOUTHERN was forced to operate its hotshot intermodal train 21E on Saturday mornings from Morrisville to Chicago via an unusual route over AMTRAK's Harrisburg line through Coatesville and Lancaster.....At 8:54 PM on Friday morning, January 17, Warminster-bound train #458 smashed into an automobile at the Warminster Road grade crossing in Hatboro. The car was stopped on the tracks between the crossing gates as the train approached. The female driver was injured and rushed by ambulance to the hospital, but later died. Service was suspended between Willow Grove and Warminster for the rest of the evening, with passengers transferred to shuttle buses.

(Continued on Page 4)

PHILADELPHIA EXPRESS

(Continued from Page 3)



AMTRAK



CSX, NS, OTHER ROADS

Last month AMTRAK and the California High-Speed Rail Authority announced a joint request for proposals to build 43 high-speed trainsets. Twenty-eight of these would go to Amtrak, presumably to replace the 20 aging Acela trainsets now in service. Each new train would have 400 to 450 seats, adding needed capacity to Northeast Corridor service. Federal Railroad Administrator Joseph Szabo said the RFP is part of an effort "to standardize domestic rail equipment and reinvigorate U.S. manufacturing." No estimate of a delivery date was given (NARP).....Siemens is continuing to turn out new ACS-64 electric locomotives in its 70-unit order for AMTRAK. Tests runs have already been made on the Northeast Corridor and #601 made a test trip to Harrisburg on Thursday, January 16.....Correcting a boo-boo made here last month, the rock fall which blocked service on AMTRAK's Harrisburg line actually occurred on Monday, December 30, not January 30. The slide fence at Conewago, west of Elizabethtown, detected the fall and alerted an approaching train to the danger. This ex-Pennsy slide fence may be the only one in service on Amtrak-owned lines.

A 101-car CSX freight train headed toward the South Philadelphia yard derailed seven cars on the ex-Pennsy Schuylkill River bridge early in the morning of Monday, January 20. Six were tank cars containing crude oil and one was a buffer car loaded with sand. There was no spillage but it took CSX more than a week to drain the oil and remove the cars so the bridge could be reopened. The Schuylkill Expressway, I-76, was closed periodically while CSX crews struggled with the cleanup.....A huge water main break at the Bakers Centre shopping plaza in Nicetown on the morning of Saturday, January 11, not only shut down the Centre but also sent loose dirt and rocks onto the adjacent CSX Trenton Subdivision tracks. The former Reading Richmond branch was cleared of the debris the same day.

Both CSX and NORFOLK SOUTHERN had good years in 2013. CSX reported record revenues of \$12.0 billion, operating income of \$3.5 billion and an operating ratio of 71.1 percent. NS also recorded record revenues of \$11.2 billion, operating income of \$3.3 billion and an improved operating ratio of 71.0 percent.....As mentioned above, NS on two Saturdays in January rerouted Morrisville-to-Chicago intermodal train 21E via AMTRAK through Lancaster, due to trackwork on SEPTA in Norristown. (The normal route for NS trains into and out of Morrisville includes about one mile of SEPTA-owned track through Norristown.) Other NS trains were detoured over CSX's Trenton Subdivision between Woodbourne and Port Reading Junction, NJ, where they switched over to NS's Lehigh Line to and from the West.

NJ TRANSIT has approved a contract to design a permanent storage yard on AMTRAK south of New Brunswick. The yard could hold up to 150 cars if evacuated from flood-prone areas such as those in which much equipment was damaged by Hurricane Sandy in October 2012 (Trains).....The Russian-owned Evraz Steel plant along the Northeast Corridor in Claymont, DE, closed in December. The 90-year-old plant formerly operated by Phoenix Steel was a longtime Pennsy, Conrail and NS customer (Railpace).....On November 14 Member Dale Woodland photographed three new cars for Boston's MBTA crossing the Delaware River at West Trenton at the end of CSX freight train Q300. The multilevel cars are part of an order for 75 cars being built by Hyundai-Rotem in South Philadelphia (Railpace).

As part of its massive rebuilding of highway I-95, PennDOT will construct two new bridges to carry CONRAIL tracks over Richmond Street in Port Richmond. The present ex-Reading bridges are low-clearance structures which often rip the tops off of trucks passing under them. PennDOT is spending \$91 million to improve streets and relocate utilities near the I-95-Girard Avenue interchange. Over the next two years Richmond Street itself will be rebuilt and relocated through the area, along with tracks for trolley Route 15.

AMTRAK President Joseph Boardman has been named Railroader of the Year for 2014 by Railway Age Magazine. Boardman told the magazine that Amtrak is "buying equipment, we're increasing our revenues, we're increasing our ridership, we're changing our direction, we have a strategy." He also said in a speech last month that the "Highway Trust Fund is dead. We need to be thinking about how to replace it with a surface transportation program for the 21st Century." Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx agreed by saying that the highway fund, which also supports transit, is going broke and by August "could start bouncing checks." The fund actually has been flirting with bankruptcy since 2008 and has required some \$53 billion in cash infusions from the general fund to keep it going. Coincidentally, the chairman of the House of Representatives Subcommittee on Railroads & Pipelines was quoted last month as saying he wants to keep Amtrak funding separate from a new highway and transit funding measure due to be enacted later this year.

A compromise \$1.1-trillion omnibus budget bill for the current Fiscal Year 2014 was signed into law last month. With the continued tightening of Federal spending AMTRAK was fortunate to emerge with an appropriation of \$1.39 billion, or \$46 million more than in FY 2013. The bad news is that Amtrak's operating budget actually was cut by \$102 million, with all of the funding increases going to the capital budget, specific projects on the Northeast Corridor and debt service. Amtrak also has the authority to flex \$40 million in capital funding over to operations if needed, and restrictive language in previous legislation was removed to allow Amtrak access to about \$80 million in Hurricane Sandy recovery funds. High-speed rail funding again was zeroed out, but the TIGER program (Transportation Investments Generating Economic Recovery) was increased from \$474 million to \$600 million. TIGER grants are awarded competitively to transit systems and railroads for capital improvements.

Did you pay your 2014 NRHS and Philadelphia Chapter Dues????



Saturday/Sunday, February 8-9, 15-16, 2014: "Cabin Fever Days" at Harrisburg Chapter's Harris Railroad Switch Tower Museum. 7th & Walnut Streets in downtown Harrisburg, close-by Amtrak's Harrisburg station. Admission: \$20 per day, with all proceeds going to the restoration and upkeep of this former PRR tower. Advance reservations are necessary, and may be made by E-mail to: HarrisFower@verizon.net, or by phone to 717-232-6221, where you'll have an opportunity to leave a message following an update on Harrisburg Chapter, NRHS activities. Space is limited, so plan early!

Tuesday, February 18: *American Experience: The Rise and Fall of Penn Station (New York)*. A one-hour documentary on the decision and actual demolition of the Pennsylvania Railroad's New York Penn Station. Show is expected to be broadcast on Channel 12, beginning at 9:00 PM.

Monday, February 24: Regular monthly meeting of West Jersey Chapter, NRHS, Haddon Heights Borough Hall, 625 Station Avenue (corner 7th Avenue), Haddon Heights, NJ, 7:30 PM. Program will be a member participation slide and digital show; maximum of 10 minutes or 35 photos, *fast-paced!* Slides should be in a Kodak Carousel tray or digitals on a CD or memory stick. Advance arrangements to participate should be coordinated with Dave Homer of WJC at dshomerwoowoo@comcast.net.

Sunday, March 2: Jersey Central Chapter, NRHS Train Show at Mother Seton High School, 1 Valley Road, Clark, NJ (Exit 135, Clark Circle, Garden State Parkway), 9:00 AM-3:30 PM. Admission: Adults \$5.00, children under 12 free. This is a long-running annual show featuring railroaders and model trains.

Saturday, March 15: 28th Annual Harrisburg Railroad Show & Collectors Market, sponsored by Harrisburg Chapter, NRHS. Hours: 9:00 AM-3:00 PM. Location: I. W. Abel Union Hall (Steelworkers' Union), 200 Gibson Street, Steelton, PA. Admission: \$5.00 per person (children under 12 free). Chapter advises its "Harris" tower museum adjacent to Amtrak station in Harrisburg will be open on this day (admission charge applies).

Saturday/Sunday, March 15-16: Greenberg's Train & Toy Show, at the Chase Center on the Riverfront, 815 Justison Avenue, Wilmington, DE 19801, 10 AM-4 PM both days. Admission: \$8.00 (good for both days), children 11 and under free.

Monday, March 24: Regular monthly meeting of West Jersey Chapter, NRHS, Haddon Heights Borough Hall, 625 Station Avenue (corner 7th Avenue), Haddon Heights, NJ, 7:30 PM. Program will feature Professional Photographer Dan Troy, speaking on techniques for great pictures. After his "clinic", Dan will present a sampling of his work featuring railroad operations in the scenic American West before and after the mergers of the last two decades.

Saturday, March 29: 4th annual Project 113 Slide Show, will take place at Christy Joy Catering Service, 141 Bulls Head Road, Pottsville, PA. Doors will open at 9:00 AM for coffee and donuts, presenters begin at 9:00 AM. Presenters are:

9:00-9:45 AM: Allen Keller, PRR in the early 1960's - my experiences as a locomotive inspector for remote control locomotives.

10:00-10:45 AM: Bob Warner - 1950's Steam around the City of Reading, PA.

11:00-11:45 AM: Don Young, South African Steam

11:45 AM-1:00 PM: Lunch break

1:00-1:30 PM: Joe Fusco's 113 Restoration Presentation and slides from the John Pritz collection of Jersey Central and Reading steam.

1:45-2:30 PM: Kermit Geary, Lehigh & New England Railroad in General.

2:45-3:30 PM: Craig Werley, Kantner Slide Collection, the Conrail Era.

There will be a buffet-style lunch of city chicken, ham, stuffed shells, mashed potatoes, stuffing, green beans and mixed homemade desserts.

Admission: \$30 per person, including lunch. Seating limited. Order tickets, first come, first served from Project 113, 113 East Sunbury Street, Minersville, PA 17954-1720. Make checks payable to "Project 113". For additional information and directions, telephone 570-544-8300 or E-mail: rrproject113@hotmail.com.

Saturday, May 3: Lackawanna & Wyoming Valley Chapter, NRHS, together with Reading & Northern Railroad will operate "Vosburg Flyer" diesel-powered rare mileage photo freight excursion over R&N Lehigh Division. Two-unit set of EMD SD38 diesels will power ten-car train of mixed freight cars, caboose and passenger cars (including full dome). Numerous options available, including coach, dome, caboose and cab ride (varying prices). Trip leaves 10:00 AM from Duryea. For complete information, including box lunch, telephone 570-575-5320 or visit on-line: www.laurellinesspecials.org. Some very rare mileage will be covered on this trip.

2014 NRHS CONVENTION - SPRINGDALE ARKANSAS

Tuesday-Saturday, June 10-14: Annual NRHS Convention at Springdale, AR, featuring the Arkansas & Missouri Railroad, heavily Alco-powered. Daily highlights include:

Tuesday, June 10 - A&M round trip Springdale-Bentonville, A&M photo freight and night photo session. Evening seminar.

Wednesday, June 11 - Eureka & North Springs coach roundtrip, plus dinner train, other non-rail activities and tours.

Thursday, June 12 - A&M Springdale to Fort Smith excursion, plus tour of former Frisco station at Fort Smith and A&M yard and shop tour, heritage tour of local sites plus evening seminar.

Friday, June 13 - Tours of Fort Smith historic sites, including Fort Smith Trolley Museum, plus first Walmart store. NRHS Board of Directors and Advisory Council meetings, NRHS Membership Meeting, NRHS annual banquet.

Saturday, June 14 - A&M Springdale to Monett (MO) round-trip excursion, A&M shop tour, evening seminar.

Sunday, June 15 - Post-convention activities include A&M Springdale to Butterfield (MO) excursion, Arkansas Naturals baseball game.

NRHS Convention hotels are the Holiday Inn-Springdale as well as adjacent Hampton Inn & Suites, with \$99 per night room rates. For complete registration information and current ticket information, visit www.nrhs.com. Some events have limited capacity or may be near sell-out.

New Year Comes in Like a Lion

(Continued from Page 1)

MONDAY, JANUARY 6: Weatherwise, this was a relatively tranquil day in the Delaware Valley, with the mercury reaching 60 degrees in Philadelphia at 6 AM. But the polar vortex was moving rapidly eastward after wreaking havoc in the Midwest, its approach signaled by a 22-degree drop in temperature in just seven hours. In Chicago the mercury was a brutal minus-16 degrees as Amtrak struggled to keep its long-distance trains moving into and out of the Windy City. Many trains had to be cancelled due to the dangerously low temperatures and heavy snows, as modified schedules were placed in effect on most routes. (It was not until Sunday, January 12, that Amtrak service to and from Chicago would be fully restored.)

Service on the Northeast Corridor was suspended between Philadelphia and Baltimore at around 6:15 on Monday evening, following an overhead power failure south of Wilmington. Southbound trains 127 and 171 were stalled in the Wilmington area for nearly five hours. Several other Amtrak trains were held at 30th Street Station and at Baltimore until the railroad was reopened around 11:15 PM. Several SEPTA trains also were delayed but were able to reach the Wilmington station, with DART buses providing shuttle service for Newark passengers. SEPTA also experienced an overhead power loss in the center city tunnel for about 45 minutes starting at 5 PM Monday, disrupting service on all lines. More than 100 trains were delayed and four annulled. That same morning a tree fell on the catenary over #4 track at Strafford station, which also brought down a Peco wire. That delayed six Paoli-Thorndale trains and forced the annulment of inbound trains #540 and 542.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 7: This was a horrendous day for all modes of transport, not just rail. The air temperature in Philadelphia rose from a record-setting low of 4 degrees in the morning to only 13 in the afternoon, creating dangerous conditions for anyone forced to be outdoors. Amtrak ran with reduced frequencies over the entire Boston-Washington Corridor. The Arctic blast forced the cancellation of thousands of flights throughout the Northeast and Midwest throughout this period, and made highway travel a nightmare in many states. For Amtrak and commuter agencies this was the worst day so far. Made brittle by the cold, overhead wires fell at Bristol about 7:15 on Tuesday morning, knocking all but track #1 out of service for several hours. Twelve Accla, Northeast Regional and Keystone service trains were either cancelled or short-turned until the three tracks were reopened between Trenton and Philadelphia at 11 AM. A total of 14 SEPTA trains had to be annulled, with #736 leaving Trenton at 11:48 AM the first inbound train to run, and #733 from 30th Street at 12:07 PM the first outbound.

Amtrak ran a reduced schedule all day on the NEC and the Harrisburg line, the extreme cold taking its toll on its facilities, especially catenary. Wires fell on top of Harrisburg-bound train #605 near Thorndale around 7:15 AM, knocking track #4 out of service and forcing Amtrak to operate its trains in both directions on #1 which is signaled for eastbound only. SEPTA had to suspend all service west of Malvern for most of the day. Shuttle buses were provided to handle westbound passengers from Paoli station starting with train #9561 **Great Valley Flyer** which arrived there at 5:38 PM. (Amtrak trains were picking up inbound SEPTA travel from outer stations on the line.) Some train service to and from Harrisburg continued during the outage, although at least five

Keystone trains were cancelled because of the morning blockage at Bristol. The wires at Thorndale were repaired by 10:15 PM, with SEPTA train #587 leaving Paoli at 11:11 the first to operate through to Thorndale. SEPTA also cancelled trains elsewhere on the system and numerous car shortages were reported. One engineer prepared for the cold by showing up for work wearing a heavy fur coat!

On the transit side, there were numerous delays on bus and trolley routes, with shuttle buses operating on trolley Route 15 Girard Avenue for much of the day. Media-Sharon Hill trolley lines also were bused for a time during the morning rush due to power problems, but rail service was restored by 10:30 AM. On the Market-Frankford Line A and B service was cancelled, all trains making all stops as delays of up to 15 minutes were posted. NJ Transit reported delays on its light rail River Line between Camden and Trenton due to switch problems, as well as delays on numerous rail and bus lines in North Jersey. The agency announced that systemwide cross-honoring of tickets between modes would be in effect both on Tuesday and Wednesday. PATCO operated local service only, with no express trains in the morning. Highway conditions also were bad, with motorists and truckers suffering breakdowns and delays. AAA Mid-Atlantic reported that it received 1,824 calls for help during the day, 34 percent more than the previous Tuesday. Many trucks had difficulties because the viscosity of diesel fuel is affected by low temperatures. At the Airport 88 of 1,333 flights were cancelled, according to an *Inquirer* report.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 8: Rail travel began returning to normal this morning as the temperature moderated to a high of 25 degrees, although Amtrak continued to operate a modified schedule on the Northeast Corridor and its Keystone line to Harrisburg. A signal failure on SEPTA's Chestnut Hill West Line resulted in a host of delays through the morning, and a downed catenary wire at Bethayres around 6:30 AM caused eight annulments and several more delays on the West Trenton line. But an even more aggravating situation on Regional Rail occurred during the afternoon rush when car shortages and the weather resulted in severe overcrowding at center city stations. A long list of trains ran late due to the passenger crush. A huge ice jam on the Delaware River at Trenton caused flash flooding in low-lying areas on both sides of the river, but there was no effect on rail service. The frigid temperatures also put a strain on electric power supplies, and PJM Interconnection officials who regulate the flow of electricity in 13 eastern states again asked consumers and industries to curtail their power demands to avoid overloading the power grid. PJM said the system's load of 138,000 megawatts around 8 AM on Tuesday set an all-time record for winter peak usage.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 9: Amtrak's Northeast Corridor, Keystone and Empire Services returned to full operation as temperatures continued their recovery. (The mercury reached a balmy 35 degrees in Philadelphia.) SEPTA had a few problems, including the suspension of all evening service on the Cynwyd line when low air pressure failed to operate switches at Amtrak's "Zoo" interlocking. A number of Paoli-Thorndale trains also were delayed by the switch malfunction for anywhere from five to 60 minutes. At 6:20 PM Doylestown-bound train #6586 struck a van at the old Route 202 highway crossing just north of Chalfont. No injuries were reported but shuttle buses had to be pressed into service until 10 PM, by which time the damaged train and vehicle

(Continued on Page 7)

New Year Comes in Like a Lion

(Continued from Page 6)

had been towed from the scene. During the shutdown 11 trains were annulled between Chalfont and Doylestown. Car shortages continued, including one push-pull set out of service.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 10: Ice and freezing rain bedeviled the morning rush, but SEPTA reported few problems other than the ongoing car shortage. One of those problems was a recurrence of the switch failures at "Zoo" which isolated the Cynwyd branch and forced the cancellation of all service on that line during the morning. Icy roads caused numerous traffic accidents, with speed restrictions posted on many highways and on the Delaware River bridges. In South Jersey where black ice was a widespread hazard, State police responded to more than 250 accident calls between 7 and 10 AM, the worst of which occurred in Pine Hill. At 7:30 AM a female driver was killed when her SUV spun out of control and was struck by an NJ Transit bus. By afternoon the temperature had reached a high of 36 degrees, then skyrocketed to 61 degrees the next day.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 21: Mother Nature provided an unwelcome encore to these events when an even worse storm struck the Delaware Valley. Snow began to fall on Tuesday morning as an Arctic weather system from the Midwest brought a blast of frigid air, which clashed with a moisture-laden storm tracking north from the Carolinas. Tuesday afternoon proved to be a nightmare for anyone venturing out in an automobile. Twenty-minute trips turned into three-hour pilgrimages as early rush-hour drivers gridlocked city streets and jammed the expressways. Hundreds of accidents littered the roads. Nearly 600 flights into and out of International Airport were cancelled, and many others seriously delayed. This narrow band of heavy snow mainly affected what TV reporters like to refer to as the "I-95 Corridor" between New York, Philadelphia and Washington. This, of course, is also Amtrak's Northeast Corridor.

Amtrak service was hit hard by the storm on Tuesday, with many delays and five train cancellations on the NEC. Acela Express #2165 was 4 hours and 10 minutes late arriving in Washington and Regional train #171 was 3 hours and 21 minutes late. (Long-distance trains such as the **Vermont**, **Cardinal**, **Crescent**, **Carolinian**, **Pennsylvanian** and the Silver Service trains all ran with minor delays.) Keystone Service also was affected as train #647 arrived in Harrisburg 3 hours and 46 minutes late. Several other afternoon and evening trains were annulled in both directions.

The SEPTA Regional Rail system was hard-pressed to maintain service, especially during midday as many center city stores and businesses closed early, forcing thousands of homeward-bound riders to jam the Market East, Suburban and 30th Street Stations. Forty to 50-minute delays were posted on all lines. A total of 58 trains were cancelled during the day, with on-time performance sinking from a normal 90 percent to 50 percent. SEPTA was roundly criticized for not rolling out extra trains and cars to meet the sudden upsurge in demand, but Deputy General Manager Jeffrey Knueppel explained that the logistics of reassigning equipment and crews on short notice prevented this. Bus and trolley routes also suffered widespread delays and the Broad Street subway and Market-Frankford Line ran trains all night rather than the usual NiteOwl bus service. In Royersford, a car inching along Main Street got stuck inside the railroad crossing

gates, but the female driver escaped from the car before it was struck by a Norfolk Southern freight train. A snow emergency was declared in Philadelphia and for the entire States of New Jersey and Delaware. The storm was so severe that even the King of Prussia Mall closed at 4 PM!

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 22: By the time the storm ended around midnight Tuesday a total of 13.5 inches had been measured at International Airport, Philadelphia's 7th heaviest snowfall since record keeping began in 1884. Even more fell in some suburban locations, creating terrible travel conditions for all forms of transport on Wednesday. Street and highway conditions began to improve but traffic was relatively light because many businesses and schools were closed. More than 100 flights were cancelled at the airport. The storm marked the first time in Philadelphia's recorded history that three snowfalls each exceeding six inches occurred in the same winter season before February 1. Making matters worse were the high winds and bone-chilling temperatures, with a low of 4 degrees in Philadelphia on Wednesday morning and a high that day of only 16.

Amtrak announced that it would be operating a modified schedule on the Corridor and the Keystone line. Only four out of 16 scheduled Acelas ran from New York to Washington, as a total of 23 Corridor trains were annulled on Wednesday. Six Harrisburg-Philadelphia trains were cancelled but train #43 **Pennsylvanian** did operate, leaving 30th Street 1 hour and 39 minutes late while eastbound train 42 arrived just 48 minutes down. Both trains were handled by Amtrak's 24-year-old P32-8 locomotives! A major problem reported by Amtrak was the fine snow blowing into car vestibules, which often froze and made doors difficult to operate, further delaying trains. NJ Transit also ran a reduced weekend schedule, except on the Atlantic City Line which managed to continue regular weekday service. The Camden-Trenton River Line operated close to a regular schedule, with some delays. A River Line train deadheading back to the shop was struck by an automobile at a street crossing in downtown Camden around 10 AM, briefly halting service on the line. No one was injured. Full cross-honoring of tickets between modes was offered by NJT. PATCO operated a "snow schedule" with trains every 24 minutes.

SEPTA had a very bad day, caused by the storm, equipment problems and staff shortages. The *Inquirer* reported that more than 320 vehicle operators, including about 20 percent of railroad engineers and conductors, did not report for work on Wednesday, as opposed to absenteeism of around five percent on a normal winter weekday. SEPTA was forced to annul 91 of its 742 Regional Rail trains and on-time performance on RRD dropped to 25 percent. Officials explained that many employees face the same highway problems as other motorists and train riders, and some have considerable distances to travel to their reporting locations. Supervisory personnel were able to fill in on a few runs. Like Amtrak, train delays on SEPTA were exacerbated by malfunctioning doors on many rail cars, especially the new Silverliner V's whose doors are especially vulnerable to cold weather and snow buildup in the door areas. This often forced crews to move detraining passengers to other cars or cut out the circuits on some doors so that the trains could move. SEPTA said it was planning to try a new de-icer compound to cope with the sticking doors. (The same problem also was noted with the doors in some Market-Frankford subway-el cars, but bus and trolley doors are mechanical and did not experience nearly as many

(Continued on Page 8)

New Year Comes in Like a Lion

(Continued from Page 7)

difficulties.) SEPTA officials said that they would meet on Friday with the management of Hyundai-Rotem, which built the Silverliner V cars, to see if any changes or retrofits could reduce the door failures.

On Wednesday virtually all lines experienced delays, and service was suspended on several bus routes due to street conditions. Trolley operations in the City were impeded by street conditions, and for a time Route 15 Girard Avenue had to be bused over its entire length. Routes 101 Media and 202 Sharon Hill also were bused during the morning due to a power failure. Later in the day the Sharon Hill line was restored and Media passengers were advised to take the 102 trolleys from 69th Street to Drexel Hill Junction, then transfer to buses. Addressing the issue of employee absences, the head of the Transport Workers Union which represents City Division bus and trolley operators said that many of his members live a long way from their job locations and "when the public is stranded, so are we."

THURSDAY, JANUARY 23: The frigid weather persisted, with a low of 8 degrees in the early morning and a high of 22 in the afternoon. Once again, only four Acela schedules were operated from New York to Washington and six Regional trains were cancelled as Amtrak continued to operate a reduced schedule on the NEC. Reports surfaced that many Acela trainsets were taken out of service due to the effects of the fine snow, and indeed southbound #2165 was operated with AEM-7 power and conventional Amfleet equipment. Four Keystone trains also were cancelled in their entirety on Thursday. SEPTA still was reporting problems on its Regional Rail system with a general statement that riders should expect delays of up to 20 minutes systemwide. But "mark-offs" by employees were almost back to normal levels and train delays were reduced, a definite improvement over the previous two days.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 24: There was not much change in the bitterly cold temperatures, as Philadelphia recorded a low of 8 degrees in the morning and a high of only 19. But rail and transit service improved as clean-up work lessened the after-effects of the storm. For the third day in a row Amtrak modified its service, running fewer trains on the Corridor and Keystone line. Nine southbound Acelas out of the scheduled 16 were operated while six Regional trains were annulled. A total of eight Keystones were cancelled in their entirety. SEPTA still experienced delays on its Regional Rail system and some delays were reported on trolley and bus routes. The Route 34 trolley line on Baltimore Avenue was being bused between the 40th Street portal and 61st Street.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 25: Despite an additional inch or two of snow today in the Delaware Valley, Amtrak came closer to a full schedule in its Corridor and Keystone services. One early-morning Acela round-trip between New York and Washington was cancelled as well as eight Regional trains and four Keystones. The low temperature in Philadelphia was 19 degrees and the high reached all the way to 26 degrees, making this the 4th consecutive day when temperatures never rose above the freezing mark. SEPTA's service over the weekend was at its best level since Monday, but with numerous ten or 20-minute delays reported. Regional Rail service to and from Norristown ran on a regular schedule, as the track construction project that forced

shuttle bus service between Conshohocken and Norristown on previous weekends was postponed due to the weather. The long period of frigid temperatures was causing an unusually heavy ice buildup on the Delaware River from Philadelphia north, which Coast Guard ice breakers were attacking in order to keep river traffic moving. PennDOT said it had already put down some 100,000 tons of rock salt on area highways so far this season.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 26: Amtrak cancelled four Acela round-trips plus eight Regional trains and one Keystone round-trip between Philadelphia and Harrisburg. SEPTA and NJT services were back to normal. On Monday Amtrak annulled five Acela round-trips but all Regional and Keystone trains were operating. On Tuesday seven Acelas were annulled, the likely result of a continuing shortage of equipment.

In recent weeks all modes of transportation in our region have struggled mightily to cope with very difficult weather conditions. At this writing some bitterly cold temperatures were being forecast for Philadelphia in the last week in January, but no crisis-causing storms. Still, the winter is far from over and there may be more to report on the weather front next month.

--- Frank Tatnall

Well-Known Traction Historian and Modeler Richard Vible Passes Away

Well-known Philadelphia traction historian and modeler Richard Vible passed away suddenly on January 12, 2014, at the age of 73. Richard lived in the Northern Liberties section of the Quaker City, with his pet dog and cat.

Richard was U. S. Army veteran, having served in the early 1960's in Key West, FL. Following his Army obligation, he joined Philadelphia Transportation Company in February, 1966, driving buses from Germantown depot. He transferred to streetcars while at Germantown, working Route 23 for two years. In 1968, he transferred to Luzerne depot, working Routes 6, 47, 50, 53, 56 and 60. In 1994, he transferred to Elmwood depot, working Routes 11, 13 and 36, but never 10 or 34.

Approaching his retirement in 2002, he was often found as the motorman on Peter Witt car #8534. Richard was also an intense trolley modeler and was well known in that arena.

Richard's funeral was held on Saturday, January 18 historic Tacony Baptist Church on Disston Street in Philadelphia. Interment took place in Washington Crossing National Cemetery in Bucks County on Monday, January 20, his 73rd birthday.

(--Information from Chapter Member Charles P. Long)

