



# CINDERS

DECEMBER 2017



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Volume 78

Number 11

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

**Chapter Website: [www.nrhsphiladelphia.org](http://www.nrhsphiladelphia.org)**

## Holiday Greetings

*It's getting cold outside, and we've just celebrated another Thanksgiving. This tells us we are approaching the end of another year in our travels through life. It also reminds us that, just like the families and relatives we love, so do we cherish the rail transportation industry we so passionately care about. As Philadelphia Chapter closes out its 81<sup>st</sup> year, we look back on the accomplishments of 2017.*

*Our Chapter has enjoyed a relatively stable year. The Chapter's officers have stepped up to serve the membership once again, but with that is the reminder that those who serve you are aging, resulting in a physical challenge to each of us. After five years of a somewhat turbulent relationship with Drexel University, a sudden opportunity arose for a new meeting venue which has proven quite successful. Thanks to Ken Thomas, we were able to secure a meeting location in an active railroad station - a portion of SEPTA's Elkins Park Regional Rail Station, under the auspices of the Cheltenham Arts Alliance. "Elkins Central", as the meeting room is known, provides a comfortable and convenient location for our members to attend each month. We are pleased to have established this relationship, which we hope will be long-lasting.*

*SEPTA continues to make infrastructure and service improvements, in spite of encountering a couple of serious operational and safety challenges during the year. During December, SEPTA General Manager Jeff Kneuppel should expect to find the first Siemens ACS-64, #901, poking its nose out of the top of his Christmas stocking!! Not so certain is the delivery of 45 push-pull double-deck coaches to roll along with the 13 ACS-64's. Aging Regional Rail Silverliner IV MU cars, as well as equally tired Kawasaki light rail vehicles and Broad Street subway cars are going to test the ability of SEPTA's staff to keep them running. The bus situation seems much better, with more new rubber-tired creatures being delivered.*

*Our friends at Amtrak are also challenged by an aging Superliner and Amfleet vehicles. For the short term, the Amfleet single-level cars are going through an upgrading similar to the Capstone program of the early 2000's, to roll with their "Cities Sprinter" leaders. The long-distance fleet is somewhat shakier, with no replacement for Superliner equipment on the horizon, and a fleet of General Electric P40 and P42 diesel locomotives suffering an unfortunate level of failures, often in some obscure location. A couple of derailments in New York's Penn Station has shown the fragility of some of Amtrak's track structure, coupled with power and signal failures on a too-often basis. But good things do happen out there - we in the rail history community have experienced another sold-out Amtrak Autumn Express, providing an enjoyable experience to knowing rail enthusiasts, but to some first-time passenger train riders as well.*

*The purpose of our organization is to record rail transportation history. We seldom editorialize, leaving those functions to the rail advocacy groups who serve alongside us. But, as we enter the Year 2018, we all remain supportive of the railroad and transit organizations which serve the public. May we look forward with optimism to keep the wheels rolling in America and around the World.*

R. L. EASTWOOD, JR.,  
 President

### Meeting Cancellation Notice

*In the event of an extreme weather or transportation emergency on a Philadelphia Chapter meeting date, Chapter officers will make a decision on whether to hold the meeting as scheduled. If questionable circumstances arise, members should telephone 215-947-5769 after 12 Noon on the day of the meeting for a recorded advisory. Thank you.*

## OUR MEETING:

**THURSDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2017**

SEPTA Elkins Park Regional Rail Station, Elkins Central Meeting Venue, 7879 Spring Avenue, Elkins Park, PA 19027. See Page 8 of our May issue for complete details on the meeting location and amenities for our new location, as well as transportation schedules, which have not changed from our last meeting. **DANGER! DO NOT ATTEMPT TO ACCESS OUR MEETING ROOM FROM THE DOOR ON THE INBOUND PLATFORM TO PHILADELPHIA! YOU WILL TRIGGER POLICE & FIRE ALARMS!! WALK AROUND TO THE SPRING AVENUE ENTRANCE TO THE BUILDING.**

### MEETING START TIME: 7:00 PM

To end the Year 2017, Chapter Member Kevin Feeny has promised his annual power point-potpourri covering his far-flung rail travels during the year. Members are reminded that our December 14 meeting is on the **second Thursday** of the month. The Chapter's officers have not yet established our program schedule for the first six months of 2018, and while some programs have been suggested, we have not firmed things up. Stay tuned.

Over the past several months, we've provided a selection of excess hard-cover books from the Chapter's storage site. We'll be trying to assemble another group for December. These books are provided to members FREE OF CHARGE. Please come and help yourself to some additions for your personal book library.

## WILLIAM C. McFARLAND

**July 9, 2017**

Philadelphia Chapter has recently learned of the passing of NRHS and Chapter Member William C. McFarland, of Downingtown and Honey Brook, PA on Sunday, July 9, 2017, following a brief illness. Bill was 86 years of age.

Bill was a 1949 graduate of West Chester High School, and received his bachelor's degree from Drexel University. He was a U. S. Army veteran, having served in Germany. He spent his career at Lukens Steel Company in Coatesville, working in the accounting department.

He joined NRHS and our Chapter in 1999. He was a lifelong member of Central Presbyterian Church in Downingtown, and is survived by two cousins. A memorial service was conducted on Friday, July 14 at Tai Hai Retirement Community Chapel in Honey Brook. Interment was private.

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*

**CHAPTER WEBSITE:** For current Chapter information, as well as vintage views of Chapter trips and activities, visit website: [www.nrhsphiladelphia.org](http://www.nrhsphiladelphia.org)

#### CHAPTER OFFICERS (Elected)

President.....R. L. Eastwood, Jr. (215) 947-5769  
Senior Vice President .....Daniel Knouse (215) 659-3436  
Vice President & Treasurer.....Richard Copeland (215) 343-2765  
Secretary .....Marie K. Eastwood (215) 947-5769  
National Representative.....Peter M. Senin, Jr. (609) 458-2090

#### COMMITTEE CHAIRS (Appointed)

Editor.....R. L. Eastwood, Jr. (215) 947-5769  
Equipment Chair.....David R. McGuire (856) 241-8046  
Historical Archivist.....Kenneth Thomas (215) 635-2335  
Membership Chair.....Sheila A. Dorr (610) 642-2830  
Program Director.....Harry Garforth (215) 266-3180  
Publicity Chair.....  
Webmaster.....Daniel Knouse (215) 659-3436

**2018 ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES:** Effective September 1, 2017, \$20.00 per person, which covers Philadelphia Chapter dues through December 31, 2018. (NRHS National membership dues for 2018 are \$50.00, billed directly by NRHS – expected to be mailed about November 15, 2017). NRHS chapters bill their members separately for Chapter dues, and these were mailed between October 12 and 20, 2017. The donation requests for Philadelphia Railfriends were mailed during October via separate mailing from *Cinders*. Anyone interested in becoming a member of Philadelphia Chapter, NRHS should forward remittance in the amount of \$20.00 to Post Office Box 7302, Philadelphia, PA 19101-7302. Please be sure to include name, valid mailing address, telephone number and E-mail address, as applicable. Remittance should be made payable to **Philadelphia Chapter, NRHS**.

**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 **ANY E-MAIL ADDRESS** so our records are complete.

*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 [ayrestower@comcast.net](mailto:ayrestower@comcast.net).

### If your *Cinders* Arrives in Damaged Condition

If your *Cinders* arrives damaged or with pages missing, contact Editor Larry Eastwood at 215-947-5769 or [ayrestower@comcast.net](mailto:ayrestower@comcast.net) and a replacement copy will promptly be sent to you. The incidence of damage has been greatly reduced through the use of envelopes for mailing each issue, although there is an additional cost involved.

## PHILADELPHIA CHAPTER, NRHS

**Board of Directors Meeting  
Winter, 2018**

**Tuesday, January 16, 2018  
7:00 PM to 8:30 PM**

**Amtrak 30<sup>th</sup> Street Station  
(Gather at 6:45 PM at the World War II Statue  
on the 29<sup>th</sup> Street side of the Station)**

## CORRECTION to Autumn Express Article in November Cinders

*In the process of assembling the article on Amtrak's 2017 Autumn Express, the routing through the Jersey City area was not published as intended, following review and correction by Frank Tatnall on the complicated routing of the trip. Accordingly, the first two full paragraphs on Page 8 should be replaced by the two below to make the story accurate. To be sure, the "gremlins" arose in finishing the article!*

Also joining us at Newark were a Conrail Shared Assets crew, who would navigate the train from that point to "CP-1" on CSX's ex-NYC River Line. At Newark, the 642 was shut down and the 145 and 156 were powered up for nearly all of the trip. It should be pointed out that the three locomotives were MU'd, and when out from under the wire, the train was operating as a push-pull set, with both the 145 and 156 powering the train. At "NK" on the former Lehigh Valley, the train reversed direction, heading alongside Oak Island Yard and crossing the Upper Bay drawbridge. The train then traveled the former National Docks Branch to get to "CP-Nave", where the River Line connection was made and we passed through the former Erie tunnel.

Veteran Philadelphia Chapter members will remember our 1985 "West Point Special" which wandered along the waterfront in Hoboken and Weehawken before going through the former New York Central tunnel to access the River Line. This track is no longer in service, having been converted to an NJ Transit Light Rail Line, so the Autumn Express routing was different than the 1985 trip.

## Maurer Sets December 9 Auction

Maurer's Auctions, well-known to many Philadelphia Chapter members, has set a Railroadiana Auction on Saturday, December 9, 2017, beginning at 10 AM. The Auction will be held in the Blue Room of the Ridge Fire Company, which is located at 480 Ridge Road in Spring City, PA. This is located along Route 23 between Phoenixville and PA Route 100. The ladies' auxiliary of the Ridge Fire Company sells food through the day.

Normally, notification of these auctions gets to *Cinders* too late for timely inclusion in our issues, but this time, the notice was timely for our deadline. As is Maurer's practice, a pre-sale exhibition will be held on Friday evening, December 8 from 6 to 8 PM and on Saturday, the auction day, from 8 AM to 10 PM.

There will be 384 lots in this auction, consisting of a wide variety of rail paper ephemera, hardware, books, slides, etc. While there is a considerable amount of Pennsylvania Railroad items included, other rail properties are not left out.

This Maurer auction will find bidders paying 6% Pennsylvania State Sales Tax, and a 12% buyer's premium, with a 2 percent discount for cash or check. Check [#1892](http://www.Auctionzip.com) for details from Maurer's.

Philadelphia Chapter and the NRHS National organization have had a long-time relationship with Maurer Auctions, and they are reliable people. Ted Maurer has semi-retired from the active conduct of the auctions, and his daughter, Kathy Maurer, now is the mainstay of the operation.

## Amtrak's Bruce Van Sant Passes

Bruce Van Sant, Amtrak's Director of System Operations, passed away on October 26 from complications of cancer treatment. Most Philadelphia NRHS members who met him will remember him from Amtrak's excursion trains, such as several Amtrak Autumn Expresses, where Bruce delivered a program of commentary after the train's public address system. Because of the seriousness of his illness, he was not on the 2017 Autumn Express trips, replaced by Matt Donnelly of Amtrak.

In his normal day-to-day work, Van Sant was responsible for maintaining Amtrak's equipment roster and systemwide consist assignments. He was also the railroad's point person for any and all changes to train consists and equipment turns and assignments. Bruce was behind nearly every holiday program of longer trains and extra trips. When service disruptions would impact the Northeast Corridor, Bruce would often work through the night to reconfigure equipment turns for the morning.

His will be big shoes to fill and America's Railroad will sorely miss him. Services were private. Amtrak's operational schedule for Thanksgiving 2017 featured a nice color photo of Bruce wearing his New York Islanders jersey.

## Elkins Park Comes Home at November Meeting

Philadelphia Chapter's meeting on Thursday, November 19, featured a local presentation, *Elkins Park and its Environs* a fine overview of the former Reading Railroad trunk between Melrose Park and Jenkintown. The program was given by Chapter Member and *Classic Trains* Editor Robert S. McGonigal, who himself had been raised in Elkins Park and Glenside. Rob today lives with his wife in the City of Milwaukee, WI. There were 45 members and friends present at the meeting, including Rob's parents, Paul and Clara McGonigal, who remain in Glenside. Also present was a young lady named Rachel, who resides in Elkins Park and was an elementary school friend of Rob.

Our meeting room was full, and Rob's first image was of himself on his bicycle on the Elkins Park platform. His last image featured a view of the platform as it exists in 2017. In between, he screened views he had taken, and then enhanced the program with some vintage images from the Kalmbach Publishing Company print library.

Rob was East on a family vacation, and we were fortunate to have him share an evening with us, screening images of the Chapter's new meeting home. Thanks, Rob!!

## 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.

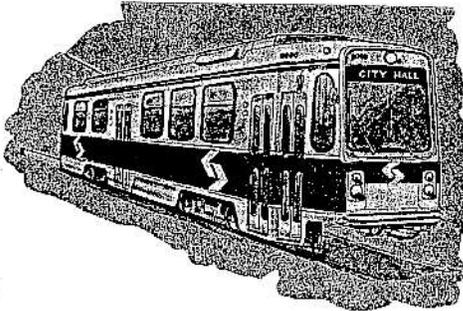
<b>AMTRAK</b>	<b>800-331-0008</b>
<b>CSX</b>	<b>800-232-0144</b>
<b>CONRAIL Shared Assets</b>	<b>800-272-0911</b>
<b>NJ TRANSIT (NJ only)</b>	<b>800-242-0236</b>
<b>NORFOLK SOUTHERN</b>	<b>800-453-2530</b>
<b>PATCO Transit</b>	<b>856-963-7995</b>
<b>SEPTA</b>	<b>215-580-8111</b>

# PHILADELPHIA EXPRESS



FRANK G. TATNALL, JR.

## SEPTA TRANSIT



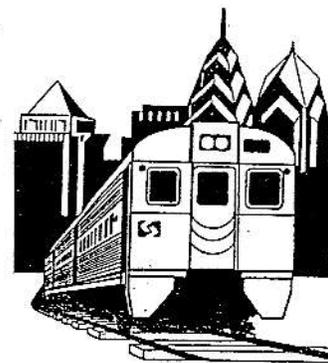
On November 16 SEPTA introduced a new app for Apple and Android devices which provides Regional Rail customers with train locations in real time (see July, September *Cinders*). Refreshed every 30 seconds, the system also will update the TrainView feature on the [septa.org](http://septa.org) website. The data is received from cellular modems installed on all Regional Rail trains as well as on virtually all trolleys and buses. A new "TransitView" feature, providing real-time information for trolley and bus riders, is currently in the final testing stage and soon will be accessible on the app or website.

Huge signs on buildings near 30<sup>th</sup> Street Station are proclaiming that the massive Schuylkill Yards redevelopment project will be coming to 14 acres in the station area (see July 2016 and July 2017 *Cinders*). This is part of the larger 30<sup>th</sup> Street Station District Plan, which currently is being "paused" until it is known whether or not Amazon accepts Philadelphia's proposal to locate a new second headquarters complex here. Amazon issued that challenge to more than 200 cities last August, and has promised to make a decision sometime in 2018. While Philadelphia may be an underdog in the fight for the \$5-billion project, a city promotional agency has spent \$85,000 on an advertising blitz to adorn 48 buses and trackless trolleys in Seattle with full body wraps promoting Philadelphia. Many employees at Amazon's world headquarters there will undoubtedly see the ads, although it's doubtful that the real decision-maker, CEO Jeff Bezos, actually rides public transit.

For the 27<sup>th</sup> year SEPTA ran its "Santa Express" trains to center city on "Black Friday," November 24. The trains used to terminate at the Gallery adjacent to Jefferson Station, but with the Gallery's closure there's been a different destination the last couple of years. That is Dilworth Park adjacent to City Hall where Santa Claus welcomed shoppers with a parade to the Rothman ice rink and the Made in America Holiday Market. Eight regular inbound trains were specially decorated as "Santa Expresses," one each from Media, Lansdale, Fox Chase, Norristown, 69<sup>th</sup> Street, Frankford Transportation Center, Fern Rock and AT&T Station in South Philadelphia. Again this year employees also will decorate several trolleys and buses in holiday garb. The *Inquirer* reports that two nascent groups are

attempting to create a "riders union" which would become an aggressive advocate for public transportation in the Philadelphia area. SEPTA is aware of the groups but already has its own independent Citizen Advisory Committee, and the Delaware Valley Association of Rail Passengers is vocal in its support for better transit service, both at SEPTA and on the political side.

The first of a new fleet of 25 all-electric battery-powered buses is expected to begin service this month on Routes 29 and 79 in South Philadelphia. Both of these routes had long been operated with trackless trolleys, but several years ago they were bused due to the cost of maintaining the electrical system. The electric buses are a small part of SEPTA's sustainability initiative which has resulted in a systemwide 36 percent cut in greenhouse gas emissions since 2006. At a public comment session in King of Prussia last month, SEPTA said that it may alter its plan for extending the Norristown High Speed Line to KOP. In order to reduce local opposition, SEPTA may tweak the proposed route by moving it from the south side of the Pennsylvania Turnpike to the north side, thus muting objections from a nearby neighborhood. The change would add \$50 million to \$75 million to the \$1.1 billion estimated cost of the project. Work is underway on new elevators at 31<sup>st</sup> & Market Streets connecting street level with the 30<sup>th</sup> Street subway station. This is Phase 1 of an \$11-million project to improve access to the station, later to include reopening of the underground pedestrian connector to AMTRAK's 30<sup>th</sup> Street Station.



## SEPTA REGIONAL RAIL

While no firm date has been set for rolling out the Key Card fare-collection system on Regional Rail, there are definite signs that SEPTA is moving forward with the plan. Installation of new fare gates and fencing is in progress at Jefferson and Suburban Stations, and card validator devices are appearing on the platforms of outlying stations. On the Paoli-Thorndale line the devices have been spotted at the Overbrook and Merion stations and installation seems to be proceeding westward. The reissuance of Regional Rail timetables has been postponed from December 10 to January 14. Construction of the new \$9.6-million pedestrian underpass at Lawndale station on the Fox Chase Line

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should begin in 2018, replacing a dangerous at-grade crossing of the SEPTA and CSX tracks.....The badly-burned body of a young male was discovered on the roof of a Silverliner IV car on Fox Chase train #814 as it pulled into Jefferson station around 7:45 AM on Friday, November 24. Numerous train delays ensued. No further information was available before *Cinders* went to press over the weekend, but it was speculated that the dead person may have been engaging in a dangerous young people's "sport" dubbed "train surfing," or attempting to ride on top of passenger trains.

The first of 15 new ACS-64 electric locomotives ordered by SEPTA emerged from the Siemens shop in Sacramento, CA, in late October. Dressed in a somewhat different striping than shown in the original artist's renderings, #901 is expected to leave Sacramento around December 1 and arrive in Philadelphia by the end of the month to begin testing.....Those two old F units, #615 and 622, once used as cab cars on work trains, were in the process of being scrapped at Wayne Electric shop last month.....Our November report that construction of the new Wawa station would begin next year was a bit premature. Work *will* begin in 2018 to rebuild the three miles of track between Elwyn and Wawa and make other right-of-way improvements, but construction of the station and parking garage will not start until at least a year later. Total cost of the project is estimated at \$150 million.

The *Inquirer* and Philly.com last month ran a series of articles exploring why Regional Rail riders suffer so many delays. One major reason—no surprise—is the fact that the worst-performing services are those that operate over AMTRAK-dispatched rails. But in a wrap-up "Tracking SEPTA" article on November 5 the writers concluded that on-time performance is getting better and there is an "overall improvement," due in part to the recent installation of Positive Train Control and, more recently, to SEPTA's new real-time train location system (see above). The information gleaned in real time will allow more dependable scheduling of trains (and may be responsible for the decision to delay issuance of the new Regional Rail timetables until next month). One long-time West Trenton rider interviewed for the series said that her service has improved since the 1980's, but "I just know that it could be so much better."

Unfortunately, after meeting its self-imposed goal of 90-percent on-time in August and September, the average OT performance in October declined to 85.3 percent. That decline was partly attributed to the usual rash of slippery rail delays in the fall, plus two trespasser deaths during rush hours. Other factors conspired to create a rash of delays during the last two days of the month. A combination of rain, high winds, and train breakdowns caused more than 300 train delays on Monday, October 30, resulting in a poor on-time record of 60 percent. At 6 AM train #309 hit a downed tree south of Fern Rock, knocking out power on the inbound track. Within 45 minutes the 350 passengers on #309 found themselves on board #501 after a side-by-side transfer, but many other trains were delayed due to single tracking through the Fern Rock area. At 7:04 AM another tree fell on the outbound track of the West Trenton line at Trevoise station. Two West

Trenton-bound trains had to be annulled before crews cleared the tree branches from the track and service resumed, but with many residual delays. Then, around 8 AM inbound train #6415 got stuck at Melrose Park due to a locked axle on the last car, Silverliner IV #278. It was another two hours before the train could be moved, causing a host of additional delays. Finally, a damaged pantograph was discovered on train #6235 near Wayne Junction at 2:35 PM, and catenary power was lost at West Trenton yard around 7 PM, again with pantograph damage. Another long list of delayed trains ensued. SEPTA quickly issued a letter of explanation—and apology—to its riders.

The next day, Tuesday the 31<sup>st</sup>, also was a downer but with fewer late trains—just over 200. Another public message from SEPTA identified the problems from the previous day which had been causing an epidemic of broken pantographs. Catenary damage on the Media-Elwyn line near Angora and on the Fox Chase Line near Newtown Junction were found and at 8 AM on Tuesday more damaged catenary was reported at Newtown Junction. This resulted in single-track operation on the Main Line for the next five hours, with the predictable laundry list of 90-plus delayed trains. Fox Chase service was suspended until 1:30 PM. Also that morning train #404 reported a broken pantograph at Hatboro, but within an hour mechanics had tied it down and the train was able to proceed to Warminster. Twelve other trains were delayed.



As it does every year, AMTRAK spent a lot of time gearing up for the busy Thanksgiving season. The special 80-page Northeast Corridor showed 39 extra trains to be operated from Tuesday the 22<sup>nd</sup> through Sunday the 26<sup>th</sup>. Extra trains in the 1100 series utilized Amtrak equipment, but the eight "Holiday Extras" which ran on Sunday were, as usual, made up of two sets of leased NJ TRANSIT cars and two sets of MARC equipment. All available Amtrak cars were pressed into service for additional capacity on some regular trains. Sixteen-page special timetables also were issued for the Keystone and Empire Services. All Thanksgiving season trains required reservations.....AMTRAK held its second annual "Track Friday" sale which offered 25 to 30-percent fare discounts over most routes on tickets purchased between Friday, November 24 and Monday the 27<sup>th</sup>. The tickets are good for travel between December and next March, and were available only on [amtrak.com](http://amtrak.com).

AMTRAK reports that it broke both ridership and revenue records in Fiscal Year 2017, which ended on September 30. Ridership of 31.7 million trips represented an increase of 1.5 percent over FY 2016, while total revenues of \$3.2 billion were 1.1 percent higher than the previous year. The Northeast Corridor alone handled 12 million riders, a one-percent increase and Amtrak's all-time highest ridership on the NEC. The railroad also set a new record for cost recovery, with ticket sales and other revenues covering 94.7 percent of operating costs.

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# PHILADELPHIA EXPRESS

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## CSX, NS, OTHER ROADS

Last month AMTRAK announced its plans for continuing the infrastructure renewal program at New York's Penn Station. The intensive project during summer 2017 concentrated on rebuilding the key "A" interlocking at the west end of the station (see October *Cinders* and previous issues). While much of the additional work will be done on weekends, there will be a series of single-track closures within the station on weekdays from January 5 to May 28, 2018. Some demolition and heavy construction work will force the closure of three platform tracks for varying periods, and at the same time three turnouts will be replaced in "C" interlocking at the east end of the station. Minor service changes will be required affecting passengers on Amtrak, NJ TRANSIT and the LONG ISLAND RAIL ROAD. Here are the major changes on Amtrak: trains #110 and 127 between New York and Washington will be cancelled, Keystone train #640 from Harrisburg will terminate at Newark and Keystone #643 will originate at Newark. NJT so far has announced that it will cancel five round-trips into Penn Station during the outage period. It's still not clear whether there will another larger curtailment of service during summer 2018.

When this column last discussed the doings at CSX, the focus was on a new management team brought in by CEO E. Hunter Harrison. That "team" is mainly embodied in one man, James M. Foote, a former associate of Harrison at CANADIAN NATIONAL, who last month took over leadership of both the Operating and Sales & Marketing Departments. Foote, it turns out, is doing pretty well at CSX, at least financially, as the media reports that he received a \$400,000 signing bonus from CSX and will draw an annual base salary of \$750,000. He also will participate in the railroad's incentive bonus plan for executives.

The National Transportation Safety Board during a hearing last month strongly criticized AMTRAK for a lax safety culture, which it said was responsible for the fatal collision between train #89 **Palmetto** and a track machine in Chester on April 3, 2016. The NTSB also cited the Federal Railroad Administration and rail unions for contributing to the safety lapses and the deaths of two maintenance workers. For its part Amtrak said that "safety is a core value" on the railroad, detailing the series of initiatives it has implemented with increased emphasis on better communications and employee training. At about the same time, the Trump Administration released its final rule for drug testing of transportation workers including railroad engineers. Under the new rule, safety-sensitive employees will be tested for opioid use as well as for alcohol and other addictive drugs (*Inquirer*, *Railway Age*, NARP).

Harrison caused another stir when he announced last month that CSX will not contribute to a proposed clearance project in the ex-B&O Howard Street tunnel in Baltimore, which would be necessary for double-stack container trains to pass through on this key north-south route. Congressional members and Maryland State officials demanded an explanation for this withdrawal, which will imperil the start of double-stack service to and from the Port of Baltimore.....Customer complaints about CSX service also continued even after a full-day "listening session" before the U.S. Surface Transportation Board on October 11, and shipper groups now want another hearing to air their grievances (*Trains*).....CSX reportedly has delayed its announced plan to centralize all dispatching functions in Jacksonville by this fall, but still expects to close the eight other dispatching centers around the system.

General Electric's new CEO, John Flannery, announced last month that GE, as part of a corporate downsizing, will sell its Transportation Division within the next two years. This means that the company will no longer manufacture locomotives at its historic plant in Erie, PA, or at a new plant opened just recently in Fort Worth, TX. For the last couple of decades GE has been the dominant U.S. builder of diesel locomotives, so it will be interesting to see if a foreign manufacturer may look to purchase the business..... Retired CONRAIL President Ronald Batory was nominated by President Trump last summer to head the Federal Railroad Administration. But his confirmation has been stalled in a dispute between the Administration and Democratic Senators from New York and New Jersey over Federal funding for AMTRAK's multi-billion-dollar project to build new tunnels to Penn Station in New York City. As a detour around this political fracas, Batory has been named a special assistant to advise Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao on railroad matters.

AMTRAK last month closed "Dock" interlocking station in Newark, NJ, remoting it and the Dock movable bridge over the Passaic River to the Section B dispatcher in New York. "Dock" was the last open tower on the Northeast Corridor between New York and Washington ("Zoo" in Philadelphia does not control Corridor traffic)..... The driver of a pickup truck lost control in Chester early on Sunday morning, November 12, landing on the AMTRAK mainline. Rail traffic was halted until the truck could be towed away .....The old Solari train destination board at 30<sup>th</sup> Street Station may soon be replaced by a digital display. The present board, with its mechanically flipping letters and numbers, is the last of its kind.

An old railroad swing bridge will become part of the expanding Schuylkill River Trail. The more than 100-year-old steel bridge, built by the Pennsylvania Railroad to connect its Main Line with the Washington Avenue branch in South Philadelphia, has been locked in the open position for more than 30 years. It



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was last used to provide access to two shippers along Grays Ferry Avenue on the isolated western segment of the branch. This was the route of PRR predecessor Philadelphia, Wilmington & Baltimore Railroad, which built the original line to reach its new Philadelphia terminal at Broad Street & Washington Avenue. The bridge will be donated by current-owner CONRAIL, then rebuilt in a \$12-million project to connect the existing Schuylkill Banks trail on the east side of the Schuylkill River with Bartram's Garden on the west side. The rebuilt span will officially be known as "Conrail Crossing."

In a related project AMTRAK has helped preserve the historic stone monument that commemorated the opening of the PW&B to Philadelphia in 1838 and its new bridge over the Schuylkill. For many years the marble obelisk stood in a neglected location along the Northeast Corridor near 49<sup>th</sup> Street in Grays Ferry. Now the 14-foot-high "Newkirk Monument," named for the president of the PW&B, has been restored and moved to a site along Bartram's Mile, the section of Schuylkill Banks Trail on the west side of the river.

NJ TRANSIT is taking flack for its allegedly slow progress in training new engineers, according to a report in the *Record* newspaper. NJT is said to require up to 20 months for training engineers, far longer than other passenger railroads such as AMTRAK, SEPTA and METRO-NORTH. NJT is facing a severe shortage of engineers as many senior employees reach retirement age, and at times it has been forced to cancel some trains due to staff shortages. NJT responds that to speed up the training could cause its safety standards to be compromised..... NJT has begun requiring engineers to undergo a new test for sleep apnea, after the engineer running the train that crashed at Hoboken Terminal in September 2016 was later diagnosed with the sleep problem. A total of 373 NJT engineers have been screened for sleep apnea, with 44 of them found to have the condition. All but three have received the necessary medical treatment, so those three were being held out of service (*Trains*).....The derailment of an EAST PENN train in Sellersville on June 20 was the result of poor track maintenance which caused rails to spread on a curve, according to an FRA report. Three refrigerated cars carrying butter went off the track, spilling about 750 gallons of diesel fuel into a nearby creek. This occurred on the ex-Reading Bethlehem branch, now owned by SEPTA and leased to ESPN.

I extend my best wishes to all Chapter members and *Cinders* readers for Christmas, Hanukkah and the New Year!

**2018 NRHS CONVENTION**  
**Ramada Inn**  
**(former Holiday Inn)**  
**CUMBERLAND, MARYLAND**  
**August 7-11, 2018**



### Tuesday, December 12:

Regular monthly meeting of Harrisburg Chapter, NRHS, Hoss's Restaurant, 743 Wertzville Road, Enola, PA. Optional dinner at Hoss's 5 PM, business meeting and program start at 7 PM. Program will feature Albert Giannantonio and an illustrated talk, "*The Baldwin Locomotive Works and its Connection with the Pennsylvania Railroad*".

### Thursday, December 14 (SECOND Thursday):

Regular monthly meeting of Philadelphia Chapter, NRHS at SEPTA's Elkins Park Regional Rail station ("Elkins Central" meeting room), 7879 Spring Avenue, Elkins Park, PA 19027, 7:00 PM. Program will feature Chapter Member Kevin Feeney with his annual "PowerPoint Potpourri" covering his numerous travel adventures during the Year 2017. This program is, to be sure, always informative and entertaining!!

### Saturday/Sunday, January 13-14, 2018:

Greenberg's Great Train & Toy Show, Greater Philadelphia Expo Center, 100 Station Avenue, Oaks, PA 19456, 10 AM to 4 PM, both days. Adult admission is \$10 Saturday or \$9 Sunday. On-site ticket sales, cash only! All Saturday tickets good for both days.

### Thursday, January 18:

Regular monthly meeting of Philadelphia Chapter, NRHS at SEPTA's Elkins Park Regional Rail station ("Elkins Central" meeting room), 7879 Spring Avenue, Elkins Park, PA 19027, 7:00 PM. Program has not been announced.

### Monday, January 22:

Regular monthly meeting of West Jersey Chapter, NRHS, Haddon Heights Borough Hall, 625 Station Avenue, Haddon Heights, NJ, 7:30 PM. Program information not available as of *Cinders* presstime.

*Extra List appears in abbreviated form in this issue because of an earlier deadline due to early December Chapter meeting date.*

## West Jersey Chapter Publishes New Book, "Two Roads to Medford"

West Jersey Chapter, NRHS has announced the publication of a new softbound, 80-page book, *Two Roads to Medford*, by Christopher J. Young, Jr., and William J. Coxey. The book contains 155 photographs, plus 30 charts, maps and timetables. The book is available by mail order (see below), and at Chapter meetings.



The book covers the history of the Pennsylvania Railroad's Mount Holly & Medford Branch, Burlington Branch, Vincentown Branch and the West Jersey & Seashore Railroad's Medford Branch, from their beginnings to abandonment.

If ordering by mail, send \$22.00, plus \$4.50 shipping, payable to West Jersey Chapter, NRHS, to: West Jersey Chapter, NRHS, 147 Atsion Road, Medford, NJ 08055-1360. The Chapter indicates this is a limited edition book.

## NRHS Fall, 2017 Meetings Kansas City, MO – October 21, 2017

*The NRHS held its Fall, 2017 Conference at Kansas City, MO the weekend of October 20-21, 2017. National Representative Peter M. Senin, Jr. had a business conflict which prevented his personal attendance; however, NRHS provided Peter with a telephone hookup to his location so he could be "present". These notes are gathered from Peter and other attendees.*

The combined meetings of the NRHS Board of Directors and Advisory Council were held in Kansas City, MO on October 21, 2017. The Advisory Council met in the morning followed by the Board of Directors Meeting in the afternoon.

The Society has received a donation in excess of \$200,000, which has served to strengthen NRHS finances. The 2018 budget was approved by the Board, and includes an amount of \$20,000 to cover costs of the new NRHS membership database. NEON-com, the membership database replacement for Amelia, has all data transferred but is not quite ready to interface with the NRHS website or the membership renewal process for 2018.

That having been said, the renewal process should be ready by the end of November. However, notices will be mailed to those whose E-mail addresses are not in the NRHS database. For those members who have provided them to our Chapter, we will be sending them to NRHS, but not until later in December or early January at best.

It was reported that chapter information on the NRHS website is out-of-date and efforts will be made following the dues renewal process to update the NRHS website so it is usable.

Chapter definition continues to stagger along without a final resolution. However, the Advisory Council has recommended to the NRHS Board that (a) a minimum of 10 members would be required to establish a chapter, (b) a minimum of 5 National members required to maintain NRHS chapter status, and (c) the chapter must have a designated National Representative who is a National member (*sorry, guys, this requirement has been on hand for several decades!!*). The recommendation might be able to be approved by the NRHS Board in Spring, 2018.

NRHS RailCamp, founded by Chapter President Larry Eastwood and Leatherstocking Chapter President Bruce Hodges in 1998, was full again this past year, with 24 participating in the East session, and 12 in the West session. RailCamp dates for 2018 are still being finalized. This coming session marks the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the RailCamp program, and many "graduates" are full-time employees in the rail transportation industry.

The NRHS Film Library is being digitized and all types of this material (movies, slides, etc.) are going to Mitchell Dakelman at Phillipsburg, NJ. The process is slow, and additional funding will be needed to get the project completed. The NRHS print library will ultimately be moved to the campus of Southern Methodist University in Dallas, TX, and the process is ongoing, with packing taking place at this time.

The 2018 NRHS Convention in Cumberland, MD will take place from August 7-12, with the Ramada Inn (formerly the Holiday Inn) being the host hotel. There will be a hotel rate of \$90.00, which includes breakfast.

## 2018 Dues Renewals Processing Smoothly; NRHS Bills Coming Soon

Philadelphia Chapter's dues renewal process for Calendar Year 2018 is moving along smoothly, according to reports received from Chapter Treasurer Rich Copeland. As of Thanksgiving weekend, 131 full Chapter members had renewed, out of a total of approximately 220. Those holding Chapter-only memberships (about 40) have seen 27 renewals received. The Chapter's officers thank everyone for their quick response, as well as their generosity in providing donations above and beyond the \$20.00 dues level. It is helpful and certainly appreciated.

As stated in our November issue, bills for those holding National NRHS membership will hopefully be mailed before the end of November, following completion of details with NEON-com. Following the complete meltdown of Philadelphia-based firm Fernley & Fernley, a Montreal, Canada firm, Amelia, took on dues renewals with an equally unsatisfactory level of performance. None of these firms have been able to "piggyback" the Chapter renewal process on the National bills, in spite of the fact that it was easily done for decades when we had in-house renewals processed in Philadelphia. Back then, renewals for both National and Chapter were sent to the Chapter, who then forwarded the National dues on to NRHS.

**The separate renewal system has caused continued confusion among numerous members, with the result that NRHS National has lost significant numbers of members. Reminder: just because you paid your NRHS National dues, your Chapter dues may not be paid. This caused any number of problems in 2017, with Chapter members not knowing they were unpaid.**

Philadelphia Chapter dues remain at \$20.00 per member for 2018. Members' financial support above and beyond the normal dues level is solicited. Your dues payment only covers the issuance and mailing of *Cinders* as well as our room rental at Elkins Park. Items such as our Willow Grove storage facility and insurance are extra and dependent on members' generosity. We urge you to take a moment, if you've not done so, and submit your renewal for 2018 today, so we may complete this annual process.

## Little-Known Transportation Museum Exists in Williamsport

Information has surfaced about a little-known transportation museum which exists in Williamsport, PA in Lycoming County. It is the Peter Herdic Transportation Museum, and it contains many different artifacts specific to this area of Pennsylvania.

Included is an ex-Pennsylvania Railroad lightweight car which can be chartered for a banquet of up to 20 persons. There is also an exhibit on Williamsport's transportation system over the years.

The Museum's hours from September through May are Friday and Saturday from 10 AM to 3 PM. The Peter Herdic Transportation Museum is located at 810 Nichols Place on Williamsport's "Millionaires' Row". For information, telephone 570-601-3455, or visit website [www.phtmt.org](http://www.phtmt.org).