

# CINDERS

## SUMMER 2022



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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)**

## **Summer Dinner Trip Set for August 18 in Doylestown**

**(Details on Page 2)**

### **KEVIN FEENEY'S FINAL ISSUE**

*On Monday, July 18, then-Editor Kevin Feeney dropped an uncompleted Summer Issue of CINDERS in my lap, awaiting only the Summer Dinner article. I then asked him to rewrite parts of his article, entitled "FINAL ISSUE"? because its tone was a capsule of the personal inconveniences HE experienced, (as many of us do volunteering for organizations such as ours). His reaction to my request was a refusal to make adjustments to the article, telling me I could do it myself. This was to be Kevin's final issue of Cinders, he hinted that there might not be another issue of our newsletter. As one who has served as Editor of this newsletter for nearly a half century, I can assure our membership that THERE WILL BE a September, 2022 issue of Cinders). -RLEjr*

During his two-year tenure as Chapter President/Editor, Kevin Feeney accomplished many positive initiatives. Among them have been ZOOM meetings (due to COVID-19), a massive cleaning effort in our storage site, getting our back issues of *Cinders* scanned and made available on our website. All of these have enhanced the value of belonging to Philadelphia Chapter. He has written (Thank you in a big way to Bill Fitch), numerous "travelogue" articles for the enjoyment of *Cinders* readers. Sometimes, however, these travel articles have come at the expense of information that ought to have been included, such as historical Chapter trip reports, which was not. Four members and affiliates have passed on during the Summer of 2022, and none of this timely information appeared anywhere in this issue. The obits will all appear in the September, 2022 issue.

Overall, however, Kevin seemingly has neglected to recognize the important Heritage and significant historical accomplishments of our Chapter, which in the year 2021 marked its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of existence, without any formal recognition, such as a banquet. Yes, COVID-19 interfered with that, as well as significant restrictions on any type of excursion or industrial tour activity. This fact all the more means that local news concerning our Chapter needs to take precedence over travelogues from distant areas. When I challenged Kevin on this, his response was that our members didn't really care that we didn't keep them up-to-date on such items as pioneer members leaving this life..

Kevin's concern is that there are not "younger generation" members willing to get involved to the point of volunteering for Chapter officer positions (i.e., *Cinders* editorship, chapter officer positions) which are sorely needed as our membership ages. His point is pertinent – I would certainly hope this isn't the last issue of *Cinders*. We all need future leaders to carry us forward. Where do YOU fit into this picture??

To Kevin, we express our appreciation to you for being involved for the two years you were. Your point is pertinent – is this the last issue of *Cinders*?? We wish you luck in your future endeavors, be they in NRHS or the model railroad arena picture.

R. L. Eastwood, Jr., President and Editor Emeritus- July 21, 2022

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

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**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)

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**2022-23 ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES:** Effective January 1, 2022, \$20.00 per person, which covers Philadelphia Chapter dues through December 31, 2022. (NRHS National membership dues for 2022 are \$50.00, billed directly by NRHS.) NRHS chapters bill their members separately for Chapter dues. Donation requests for Philadelphia Railfriends were mailed during October, 2021 via separate mailing from *Cinders*. Anyone interested in becoming a member of Philadelphia Chapter, NRHS should forward remittance, payable to **Philadelphia Chapter, NRHS** 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.

**ADDRESS CHANGES:** Send to Editor Emeritus at Post Office Box 353, Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006-0353. (Include your **CURRENT TELEPHONE NUMBER** and **E-MAIL ADDRESS** so our records are complete.)

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## OBITUARIES

Our Chapter has experienced the loss of four members and friends during the Summer. Complete obituaries on these members and friends will be published in September *Cinders*.

**Alfred G. Gaus, Jr.**, of Fox Chase died on July 3 at age 75. He was a retired SEPTA employee. He was buried in Lawnview Cemetery in Rockledge, PA on July 18. It is hoped to hold a memorial service at Elkins Central in September.

**Jonn Paul Rieck** of Leesburg, NJ passed away on June 30 at the age of 78. He held memberships in both Philadelphia and West Jersey Chapters. He had been a locomotive engineer for the Cape May Seashore Lines.

Retired SEPTA conductor and former member **John Ciavatta** of Kennett Square, PA died on March 2, 2022 at the age of 81. John worked several of our Chapter's Regional Rail excursions.

National NRHS member **Robert M. Heavenrich, Jr.**, of Ann Arbor, MI died on July 12, 2022 at age 75. Bob served for many years as the National Society's Comptroller, and was familiar to NRHS Convention attendees.

(There are no Chapter meetings during July or August, 2022. Our Summer Dinner notice is listed below, to be held at the Station Tap House, adjacent to SEPTA's Doylestown Regional Rail station on Thursday, August 18, 2022. Our next in-person Chapter meeting will be held on Thursday, September 15, 2022)

## President's Message

By R. L. Eastwood, Jr.

### Chapter to Hold Summer Dinner Thursday, August 18 in Doylestown

On Thursday, August 18, 2022, Philadelphia Chapter will once again host a summer dinner outing tied to a rail ride. The Chapter has selected the Station Tap House, adjacent to SEPTA's Doylestown Regional Rail Station. Two outbound trains may be appropriate. Train #2520 leaves Wilmington, DE 3:24 PM, stops 30<sup>th</sup> Street Station 4:12, terminates at Doylestown at 5:36 PM. Train #6594 originates at 30<sup>th</sup> Station at 4:48 PM, making "D" stops, arriving Doylestown at 6:15 PM. **Returning, Train #6239 leaves Doylestown 9:11 PM (last train of the night!), making all stops, arriving 30<sup>th</sup> Street at 10:39 PM.** Watch conditional stops on outbound trains, or consult SEPTA.

The dinner is priced at \$30.00 per person (Note: The Chapter is subsidizing a portion of the cost of the dinner. **Reservations are MANDATORY, and must be made ON OR BEFORE SATURDAY, AUGUST 13 to 215-947-5769 or to Chapter Secretary Marie Eastwood as [mkecat@comcast.net](mailto:mkecat@comcast.net).** Payment will be made on site payable to Philadelphia Chapter, NRHS on August 18. The price will include the buffet dinner (menu below). **Beer and alcoholic beverages are the responsibility of the individual member.** The Chapter needs a minimum 20 attendees.

The menu includes varied appetizers, Caesar salad, entrée choice of roast beef with rolls or lemon chicken, mashed potatoes, chef's vegetable of the day, and assorted mini desserts, soft drinks, coffee or hot tea. Please join us as we return to an old Philadelphia Chapter tradition on Thursday, August 18, 2022. Dinner service runs from 6 to 9 PM. **Last train leaves Doylestown for Center City at 9:11 PM.**

## Future Chapter Meeting Dates

For the remainder of 2022, the four Chapter meeting dates are as follows:

**Thursday, September 15** – Part II of Mike Brotzman's program on former PRR mainline towers.

**Thursday, October 20** – Long Island Rail Road program by Don Fisher.

**Thursday, November 17** – Bill Welk – Mexican railroads

**Thursday, December 15** – Kevin Feeney – The Year 2022 in Review.

Our meeting dates in the first half of 2023 (all third Thursdays): January 19, February 16, March 16, April 20, May 18 and June 16.



FRANK G. TATNALL, JR.

SEPTA has made a lot of news over the summer—not all of it favorable.



Tearing up the historic Belgian block paving stones, once used extensively along trolley lines in West Philadelphia, was the subject of a lead article in the July 12 edition of the *Inquirer*. The article, entitled “Smoother trolley tracks pave over a piece of history,” includes a quote from the head of the Philadelphia Street Railway Historical Society, who laments the loss of these granite blocks that hark back to the early days of trolley service in the city.

They were used extensively to fill the area between the rails, but over the past century or more have loosened and no longer serve to secure the track in place. For its part SEPTA sees a safety issue in replacing the stones with concrete as part of its campaign to upgrade the trolley infrastructure, but many history-minded citizens may bemoan the loss of another of Philadelphia’s notable artifacts. The article focused on the rebuilding of the track on South 40th Street, which now is used only as an alternate route when the trolley tunnel to center city is closed.

The route to the 40th Street subway station was busy in late July when SEPTA closed the 2-1/2-mile trolley subway over 16 days in July for the annual “Tunnel Blitz.” The project, which began late on Friday, July 8, included critical track and power maintenance, station upgrades and major cleaning work. All cars on Routes 10, 11, 13, 34 and 36 were diverted to the Market-Frankford Line station at 40th Street. Among the work being carried out in the tunnel were the complete replacement of the eastbound platform at 22nd Street station and replacement of four miles of overhead contact wire. All stations received heavy cleaning, which included lighting, painting, graffiti removal and drain cleaning.

Another big story was the sudden retirement of SEPTA Police Chief Thomas J. Nestel III, on July 5, which the press attributed to public concern over rider safety and rising crime rates on the system. Another factor was the apparent dissatisfaction with his leadership among rank-and-file officers. Nestel, who is 60, formerly served as police chief in Upper Moreland Township, Montgomery County, and before that with the Philadelphia police. He said that he had more than 40 years in law enforcement. His interim replacement at SEPTA is Inspector Charles Lawson, a 28-year veteran of the force.

Just over a week later, crime on SEPTA and increasing gun violence across the city suddenly were back in the headlines. Shortly after noon on Thursday, July 14, a 19-year-old man was shot on the eastbound platform of 15th Street station—only a few steps from City Hall. After a train had pulled into the station, several passengers got off and a dispute erupted on the platform. Two young people drew guns and one of them shot the other three times as everyone on the platform and train ran for cover. The 19-year-old victim was rushed to Thomas Jefferson Hospital where he was listed in critical condition with wounds to the chest, stomach and hand. Although SEPTA police were quickly on the scene, the shooter managed to escape among the passengers fleeing the station. But the next day the 14-year-old gunman turned himself in to police.

Yes, there is some good news for SEPTA’s police force. In response to a long effort to raise the pay of transit police, their salaries will go up anywhere from 20 to 25% effective in August. SEPTA officials said the increases were necessary if the Authority were to compete with the higher salaries of Philadelphia police and other law enforcement agencies in the area, which often attract new officers and cause some defections from the SEPTA force. Under the just-approved agreement with the union, rookies who graduate from the police academy will earn \$62,387 a year before overtime, up from \$49,387. SEPTA also will shorten the time for officers to reach the top pay rate of about \$71,000 for patrol officers to 24 months, from the current nine years. Spending on safety and security will increase almost 50 percent to \$53 million for Fiscal Year 2023, which began on July 1. Aggravated assaults and robberies in stations and on vehicles increased more than 80% between 2019 and 2021, SEPTA said, although homicides were rare. The system is currently understaffed with 210 active officers, but only 150 to 160 of them are assigned to patrol duties.

The SEPTA board in June approved both the proposed operating and capital budgets for Fiscal Year 2023, which began this July 1 (see May Cinders). The operating budget calls for spending \$1.6-billion during the year, with no fare increases. The capital budget reaches an all-time high of \$1.1 billion, aided by new infrastructure funding from the Federal government. Also approved was the new **Neighborhood Flex Day Pass** which will be introduced this fall at a price of \$10. It is intended for use on Regional Rail trains from and to close-in Zone 2 stations as well as on buses, trolleys, and subways, up to a total of ten rides in a single day. The existing one-day Independence Pass, which covers ten trips on any Regional Rail train or on transit, will be renamed the **Anywhere Flex Day Pass**.

The City has painted the bus lane red on Chestnut Street east of Broad, apparently in an attempt to discourage motorists from parking in that lane or dropping off people. The hope is to speed bus service, and if it’s successful the red lanes may appear on other streets. SEPTA will wrap up its subway station cleaning blitz at Huntingdon on the Frankford El July 29-31, and at the Wyoming station on the Broad Street Line August 5-7. The stations are closed on those weekends.

The average daily volume of pedestrian traffic on center city streets is at 84% of pre-pandemic levels, according to a July 1 *Inquirer* report. But the report emphasizes that the missing 16% is caused by the absence of nonresident workers, many of whom were commuters on SEPTA. Foot traffic of nonresident office workers is only half of what it was in late 2019, the tabulation by the Center City District reveals. This aligns with SEPTA’s own estimates that its current ridership hovers around 53% of the number of riders carried pre-COVID. Pedestrian traffic in Center City has been boosted lately by an upsurge in visitors and shoppers, while resident traffic is down only slightly. Retail sales have reached 94% of 2019 levels, but bar and restaurant traffic is down to about 74% of 2019 levels because these are more dependent on office workers, many of whom continue to work remotely. Another possible negative is Starbucks’ decision to close its center city location on Chestnut Street, reportedly because of security concerns. This could discourage other businesses from opening or reopening downtown shops.

Adding concern to the above, a front-page article in the June 9th edition of the *New York Times* was headlined “Back to the Office? Does ‘Never’ Work for You?” It reported that “optimism about return-to-office plans, across industries and cities, is slowly abating.” A



nationwide survey by the Pew Research Center found that 60% of workers whose jobs can be done at home want to work remotely most or all of the time, not a good indicator of future ridership levels on public transit in major cities such as Philadelphia.

When will trolleys return to the Route 15 Girard Avenue line? SEPTA took the historic PCCs out of service for major repairs in 2020, with the promise that they would be back this year. For a time, the cars had been turning on a temporary loop on Frankford Avenue, just east of the Frankford El, because Richmond Street leading to the normal terminus at Richmond & Westmoreland was closed to make way for reconstruction of I-95. However, since the eastern section of the line was already being bused it made sense to bus the entire route, allowing withdrawal of the trolleys. Many doubted that the PCC's would ever return, but the *Inquirer* now reports that some rebuilt cars are scheduled to be back in service by the fall of 2023. SEPTA, however, cautions that there won't be enough trolleys to fully equip the line and some buses will still be needed to meet rider demand. There are 18 PCCs in the fleet, and the work needed to modernize the 70-year-old cars is complex and labor-intensive. The pandemic has further slowed the project. Thus far, four cars are fully restored and four more are in various stages of upgrading, while the ten remaining cars must await their turn. Eventually, new ADA-compatible vehicles will be purchased, but their introduction is at least five years off, SEPTA told the *Inquirer*.

The experimental "SEPTA Key Advantage" program will become permanent. This allows employers to directly purchase Key Cards and distribute them to their employees for use on all SEPTA modes (see April *Cinders*). The first phase of the program, which included Wawa Stores, Drexel University and Penn Medicine as sponsors, has been judged a success, with more than 7,000 of the 15,000 eligible employees now using the passes. The program resulted in a significant boost in ridership at the three institutions—an 18% increase in just the first month, and it generated a lot of interest from other employers who now will be able to participate.

It's confirmed that SEPTA will extend its Media-Elwyn Regional Rail service to the new Middletown (Wawa) station, on Sunday, August 21. This will follow the Saturday completion of this year's Southwest Connection Improvement Program (SCIP) in the University City area, allowing resumption of through train service to Media-Elwyn. The new station represents a three-mile extension beyond Elwyn, over a long-unused section of the original line to West Chester. New timetables for several lines also are expected to appear on the same date.

SEPTA will install a series of historical panels at the Allen Lane station on the Chestnut Hill West Line. The two-foot by three-foot decorative panels honor the memory and accomplishments of the Rev. Richard Allen, who as a bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church gained fame during the late 18th Century when he preached in the cause of racial justice. The street itself originally was named after William Allen, the 26th mayor of Philadelphia, who was condemned in his own lifetime for his approval of the continued enslavement of Black people. Earlier this year Philadelphia City Council adopted a resolution to officially rename Allen Lane to honor the Rev. Richard Allen.

SEPTA has extended the current free parking privileges at its suburban Regional Rail stations until December 31<sup>st</sup>. SEPTA is upgrading the Fox Chase Line to improve service reliability and ride comfort on the five-mile-long, mostly single-track line. The work includes installing a new catenary structure, replacing wood ties, surfacing the track,

installing 1,500 feet of new rail on a curve, waterproofing an undergrade bridge and preparing for the upcoming improvements at Lawndale station. During the construction period, which extends through July 29, buses operate between Fox Chase and Wayne Junction stations, also serving the four intermediate stations.

SEPTA has admitted that a software "bug" in its computer system resulted in some 1,600 passengers being double-charged on their Key Cards for rides on Regional Rail. Part of the problem seemed to be caused by some fare validators that were out of service for two weeks or more. Other double charges may have resulted from cards tapped at origin stations that were not recorded in the system. SEPTA officials said that a software fix has been made and that refunds are being issued.

Regional Rail suffered several disruptions in July due to problems on AMTRAK. On Wednesday, July 13, fallen wires on #3 and 4 tracks



south of 30th Street Station forced a shutdown of most SEPTA Wilmington-Newark service from just after noon until repairs were completed early the next morning. The problem apparently was heat-related. Though all service from the Upper Level of 30th Street was

cancelled a few trains were able to operate from the Lower Level, but because of the wire damage on #3 and 4 tracks the trains had to run express to Marcus Hook. Several Amtrak trains also were delayed because only two of the four tracks were available. A few trains had to be held at Wilmington or Philadelphia. Soon after overhead power was restored on Thursday morning, SEPTA said that Amtrak's computerized dispatching system went offline and the system would not quickly reboot. This caused up to 45-minute delays for many SEPTA trains that operate on Amtrak lines.

Late on Wednesday afternoon, July 6, an AMTRAK train struck a trespasser near Torresdale station, forcing an hour-plus shutdown of all Corridor service. Numerous Amtrak and SEPTA delays were posted but service was restored by both carriers in the evening. The previous day, Tuesday July 5th outbound train #5227 ran express from Penn Medicine to Marcus Hook at 6:40 PM because of "police activity," evidently along local track #4. Power issues near the Villanova station that evening forced several trains to bypass the station. Several SEPTA trains that same night were delayed between Melrose Park and Jenkintown stations, again due to "police activity."

AMTRAK got a new president in June. He is Roger Harris, promoted from chief commercial officer. Stephen Gardner, who had occupied the dual positions of president & chief executive officer, held on to the CEO position in the new managerial ranks at the railroad. Recipient of another promotion was Gerhard Williams whose title lengthened from Senior Vice President Operations to Executive VP, Service Delivery & Operations.

PennDOT and NORFOLK SOUTHERN have reached an operating agreement to allow the running of a second daily AMTRAK train between Harrisburg and Pittsburgh (see March *Cinders*). "Rail is critical in Pennsylvania and I'm pleased that we're moving quickly to deliver these long-needed improvements," said Governor Tom Wolf in making the announcement. Earlier, PennDOT and NS had agreed to examine opportunities to eliminate chokepoints and improve the State's rail system to better permit freight and passenger trains to operate together. The State will contribute to the project using Multimodal

Transportation Fund dollars, some of which come from last year's Federal infrastructure law. A final definitive agreement should be developed by the end of this year, with construction to begin after that agreement is executed. The new service is expected to begin within three years.

Residents of the central Main Line are all too familiar with the frequent traffic disruptions on King of Prussia Road at Radnor station. AMTRAK's century-old undergrade bridge just west of the station has a low vehicle clearance of ten feet ten inches, which is frequently challenged by drivers of oversized trucks—much to their regret. Radnor Township officials say that trucks have slammed into the bridge more than 120 times over the past decade or so, tying up traffic on a very busy road, and something must be done about it. Some drivers blame GPS for sending them over this route, but the fact is they ignore numerous large signs warning them of the restricted clearance. Now the township has come up with a new plan to help avoid these collisions. It involves erecting a roadside device similar to a traffic signal mast with an arm extending over the road, from which would dangle a sign displaying the dimensions of the obstruction ahead. Drivers of any vehicle of sufficient height will certainly notice the sign striking their windshields—which hopefully will “get their attention.” The impact of trucks hitting the bridge usually does not affect its integrity, but occasionally Amtrak inspectors must be called to the scene which can delay rail traffic.

AMTRAK is seeing a surge in ridership, particularly on its long-distance runs, according to one Internet source, but often finds itself short of the necessary equipment and staff to handle everyone. Interestingly, there also has been a noticeable shift in the composition of the ridership, with fewer business travelers and more leisure passengers, as evidenced even aboard the Acelas on the Northeast Corridor. The widely publicized failures of the airlines in handling crowds of passengers, with reports of rampant flight cancellations and chaotic airports, may also have benefited Amtrak. Rail Passengers Association President Jim Mathews said that train travel is returning with a “vengeance,” in spite of Amtrak's own well-known problems in running its trains on time. It may be hard to match the 30 million people who rode the trains in 2019, Amtrak's best year ever, but its top officials are said to be confident that demand and the love of train travel haven't gone away. Observing the trend toward rail travel will be interesting this year.

As promised, AMTRAK last month restored a considerable amount of service that was cut during the pandemic (see May Cinders). Five long distance trains that had been running only five days a week were restored to daily operation effective May 23, while the *Crescent* and *City of New Orleans* remain on reduced schedules and the New York-Miami *Silver Meteor* still is not operating. Earlier in May, Northeast Regional service between Boston and Washington was beefed up to almost 80% of pre-pandemic levels, and more Acela trains were added on frequencies not seen since before COVID-19 arrived in 2020. Keystone Service between Philadelphia and Harrisburg also has been increased to 12 weekday round-trips.

AMTRAK has been having some problems on the Northeast Corridor with temperatures that reached the mid-90's on several days in July. For example, at noon on Wednesday, July 13, the railroad issued an advisory that trains running between New York and Philadelphia might experience delays due to heat-related speed restrictions. It was suggested that prospective passengers check train status on the Amtrak website (NEC Alerts) or on Twitter. Several Amtrak trains also

encountered delays along the Corridor on July 13 due to fallen wires in Philadelphia (see above). One of the trains delayed was northbound Acela #2164, which had to be held at Wilmington for 45 minutes. Heat restrictions again were imposed the following day between New York and Philadelphia.

The Delaware River Port Authority has finally begun work which will lead to reopening of PATCO's Franklin Square station in Philadelphia, which was closed more than 40 years ago. Currently crews are relocating a water line that runs beneath Franklin Square Park, in a location where a new escalator is planned. Next in the project is construction of a headhouse, but actual reopening of the station to passengers is probably at least two years off.

A Federal judge in June issued an emergency order barring NJ TRANSIT employees from striking over the issue of a new contract with the agency. The order also forbids engineers from taking other actions such as calling out sick in large numbers, as they did on Friday, June 21 and over the following weekend. All operations had to be shut down on Friday evening and hundreds of trains cancelled over the weekend. Two weeks later a group of 14 NJT employees filed suit against the agency, charging it with failing to protect them against assaults and other abuse from passengers (*Trains*).

The City of Philadelphia has filed a formal complaint against CSX over its failure to repair the 25th Street viaduct in South Philadelphia in order to prevent chunks of concrete from falling onto the street and automobiles below (see March Cinders). Parts of the mile-long structure, which was built by the Pennsylvania Railroad in 1928, have been crumbling, creating a hazard to street traffic, and CSX had promised in 2015 to address the deterioration, but actually has done very little to mitigate the problem. This has led to the city filing its complaint with the State Public Utility Commission to enforce an order dating from 2005 that the viaduct be made structurally sound. CSX responded that the structure has been found safe for rail traffic and additional renovations are planned. The city, the railroad said, is responsible for making repairs to the drainage system.

NORFOLK SOUTHERN has officially launched its new TOP/SPG operating plan, which is



primarily focused on improving service over its intermodal network.

The acronym stands for Thoroughbred Operating Plan: Service,

Productivity and Growth. It supplements the railroad's 2019 TOP effort that redesigned its merchandise and bulk networks based on the controversial Precision Scheduled Railroading concept which streamlined operations and cut costs. NS in June also filed an amended Service Recovery Plan that the Federal Surface Transportation Board had demanded, in response to a flood of complaints from rail customers (see May Cinders).

The Railroaders Memorial Museum in Altoona is raising money to restore its long-out-of-service K4 #1361 to operating condition. The entire overhaul is estimated to cost \$2.6 million, an effort backed by such prominent supporters as former NS CEO Wick Moorman and well-known rail enthusiast Bennett Levin. The PRRT&HS committed to raising \$100,000 toward the construction of a new firebox for #1361, one of only two of the famed ex-Pennsy K4s still in existence. This is the same engine that was displayed for years at Horseshoe Curve, until

CONRAIL Chairman L. Stanley Crane authorized its release for restoration in 1985, and the engine did power several excursions before becoming inoperable. After a failed rebuild at Steamtown in Scranton and then afterward stored in pieces back in Altoona, a major effort began to restore the classic locomotive for excursion service (*Trains*).

A rather odd photo article entitled “Long Haul” appears in the current July-August issue of *Smithsonian Magazine*, picturing in color various types of contemporary freight cars as well as a double-page side view of a UNION PACIFIC GE C44ACM locomotive. Apparently, the Hudson Valley-based photographer roamed the nation to capture these flatcars, gondolas, box car and NS caboose (but no intermodal container cars) in moving trains. While his work plays to “America’s fascination with trains,” having it appear in a highly-respected non-railroad magazine such as *Smithsonian* was a bit startling to this writer.

In mid-July President Biden said that he will name a Presidential Emergency Board to head off a nationwide freight railroad strike that could have begun on July 18. Under the law the three-person board then will have 30 days to recommend terms of settlement to the long-running dispute, and after that there can be no work stoppage for another 30 days.

READING & NORTHERN ran another full-page ad in the *Inquirer* on July 15, promoting its popular diesel excursions from Reading to Jim Thorpe and return. Evidently, the often sold-out trips are attracting a good number of customers from the Philadelphia area. R&N also has scheduled Iron Horse Rambles in October, powered by its recently-restored ex-Reading T-1 locomotive #2102.

## Reading 2102-Iron Horse Ramble May 28, 2022

Harry Garforth [Photos by Robert Vogel]

A great steam excursion experience returned on May 28, when Reading & Northern RR’s T-1, #2102, powered an 18-passenger car train from Outer Station in North Reading, through Port Clinton, Tamaqua and over the Hometown Trestle before arriving in Jim Thorpe, PA. Baggage-Generator car 1250 was coupled behind the engine. The T-1, fresh from a \$2.4 million overhaul, had not been used in passenger service since 1991.



Prior to departure from Reading outer Station.

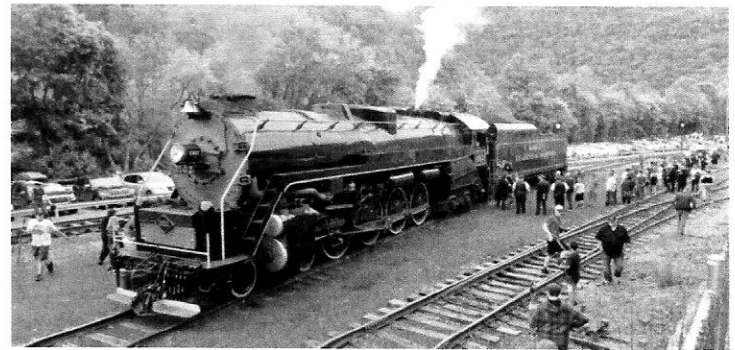
Passengers had a wide choice of accommodations to choose from including First-Class dome cars, Lounge cars, a Lounge-Observation car, and a Pullman Car. Coach seating was available in Crown Class and Standard. The ticket prices ranged from \$299 in the Pullman car to

\$99 in Coach. The varied options for train accommodations was made possible by the railroad’s recent fleet additions from the Iowa Pacific Railroad car dispositions. I opted for Standard Coach because the windows were openable to enjoy the full riding experience.

The engine was painted in the Reading Ramble scheme with Reading & Northern lettering on the tender and pilot diamond herald. Loading began at 8 AM with departure at 9 AM. Many claimed their seats and walked to the front of the consist to catch their first glimpse of 2102 after its rebuilding. Although the engine had been out on two test runs with 50 and 100 coal hoppers, this was the first post rebuild-Ramble.

Although rain fell during the first part of trip, the trackside crowds were substantial as the T-1 powered the long consist unassisted. A short stop was made at Port Clinton to pick up some additional passengers. One surprise to some passengers was the two whistles blown throughout the trip. To those listening carefully, when the climb up the grade from Tamaqua to the Hometown, some wheel slippage was noted.

Throughout the trip a detailed narration was provided giving details of the many stations passed, recent real estate acquisitions and new customers located along the route. In addition, each coach passenger received an envelope with a souvenir booklet listing all the previous Reading Railroad Iron Horse Rambles, a T-1 magnet, system map, a coach equipment history and a “Welcome Aboard” letter signed by Matt Fisher (GM) and Andy Mueller (President/CEO).



Cab tours at Jim Thorpe

Upon an arrival on time at Jim Thorpe at 1150 AM, passengers were unloaded safely and the train was towed by two SD-40-2s back out to the wye at Nesquehoning Junction. The train consist was turned for the return trip while the engine was uncoupled for servicing. The four-hour layover in Jim Thorpe allowed passengers to enjoy the town’s many attractions and ride the Lehigh Gorge Scenic trip departing at 1PM.

Before the later Lehigh Gorge Scenic train departure at 3PM, the T-1 was brought down and spotted near the station for photos and cab tours as rain continued to fall. After the 3 PM departure, a photo run by was staged with the locomotive only passing through the station area.

The anticipation grew as passengers then boarded for the train for the trip home.





A spectacular exit from Jim Thorpe was staged and the climb up the mountain ensued. Those with ears next to the open windows listened intently as the rails were slippery. As the engine worked hard, the stack talk grew louder and the exhaust blew leaves off trees creating a scene of leaves falling like snow to the ground. As the grade increased, the engine's driving wheels slipped, regained traction, then slipped again. The process was repeated frequently while the train kept moving forward to the top of the grade. These sounds were main-line mountain railroading at its finest. The Reading railroad had come to life for those recalling previous Iron Horse Rambles from their youth.

Unlike a previous ramble which took twenty-two hours to return to Reading and was operated by another post Reading Railroad entity, the train pulled into the Reading Outer Station on time! The consist included: 2102 (T-1, 4-8-4) Car 1750-baggage-generator car, ex-EL-304, 308, 301, 302, 306 & 309; souvenir and refreshment car 1168, ex-EL 307,305,303; 452 (*Gila Valley*), 453 (*San Luis Valley*), Dome 4 *Lehigh Gorge Explorer*, Dome 6 *Scenic View*, ex-SEPTA 212 (9108), Club Car 8 *Mauch Chunk*, Pullman Car 2 *Hickory Run* and Club/Observation Car 7 *King Coal*.

## NRHS NEWS

Bill Welk

On Monday May 16, 2022, I attended the NRHS' 2022 National Convention Advisory Council meeting on-line via a "Go to meeting". I serve as the Philadelphia Chapter's national representative. The meeting was held just before this year's annual convention that took place from May 17th to May 20th at Knott's Berry Farm in Buena Park, CA.

The NRHS' finances appear to be robust with a \$100,000 to award this year as part of the **Heritage Grants** program. *RailCamp* for 2023 is on schedule to take place although both 2022 *RailCamps* were cancelled due to COVID concerns.

The **2023 National Convention** will take place in September in Ft. Lauderdale, FL and the **2024 National Convention** is scheduled to be held in Hershey or Harrisburg, PA with a planned trip to the **East Broad Top** that hopefully will be in full operation by then.

There will be a **Fall Conference** in Springdale, AR from Sept. 22-25. At this meeting the new 9-member BOD will take over. The registration information for this meeting is available on the NRHS website. There will be a **Spring Conference** in the Sacramento, CA area the third week of May 2023 as a joint meeting with the R&LHS. Membership has been slowly increasing; it increased by about 100 new members last year. There are 5,385 current members and 121 active chapters. Nine chapters are no longer active.

How many of you have railroad memorabilia that's too good to throw out or place in the paper recycling? Much railroad related information has been lost over the years. A new **Share the Wealth Program** will allow railfans to assess what they have and what will become of it in the future. It will allow people (individuals, chapters, museums) to share their knowledge of railroading, photographs, movies, memorabilia, records, maps, etc. There will be a "manager" of the program. All contacts will be by email. If someone wants to trade, sell the item, or offer something as a gift, that person will email the manager. The Manager replies with an

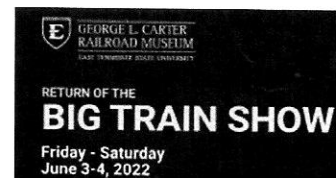
email address of a contact person. It is then up to the two parties to complete the transaction. The manager does not appraise material, receive material, send items or is responsible for completing the transaction. One good reason to try this program is that there is no expense involved other than some postage.

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## SHORT TRIP TO APPALACHIA

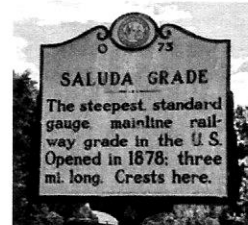
Kevin Feeney

This trip, like many of my trips, was centered around a train show. This show was a new one for me and was located in Johnson City, TENN, where I have never been before. Interestingly the advertising referred to it as "THE BIG TRAIN SHOW".



Johnson City is a small city in northeastern Tennessee. I actually looked into flying there. One can fly to the Tri-Cities airport [TRI] that serves the cities of Johnson City, Bristol TENN/VA, Kingsport, as well as neighboring parts of KY/VA/TENN/NC. However, the fare was high and included a short connection from Charlotte [CLT]. Instead, we flew direct to CLT, which allowed us to visit some family enroute. Driving from CLT, we made a very nice stop at the **EARL SCRUGGS CENTER** in Shelby NC. Earl popularized three finger playing on a five string banjo and wrote the theme song for the **Beverly Hillbillies** TV show; *come and listen to a story 'bout a man named Jed...*

Our next stop was in Saluda NC, a quaint old town that we have visited before. It is located on the crest of the Saluda Grade that is now out of service. We walked thru the town and stopped at the relocated former **Southern Depot** that is now a museum with a HO layout of the grade.



We spent the night with relatives that live near Asheville and left the next morning at 10AM for Johnson City. This a very scenic drive as I-26 passes thru the Blue Ridge Mountains. We stopped at the TENN visitor center just over the border. We arrived in Johnson City just after noon and found the ETSU campus. My wife dropped me off at the MINI-DOME[?], which was YUGE inside.



Supposedly there were more than 64k sq ft of displays. There were about 10 rows of tables that spanned the width of the dome and two modular layouts in the back.

It was a very nice show; I liked seeing vendors and displays I have

never seen before. Two local vendors were offering 3D-printed narrow gauge models. I ended up buying a bunch of HO vehicles for myself and Eric Dervinis, some UPRR annual reports, a few RR books and several HO kits.

The next morning, I briefly headed back to the show. I had missed buying something the day before but could not find the vendor. I did buy some detail parts for another friend. Then I headed over to the **George Carter L. RR Museum** that is located in the basement of the ETSU student center. The Museum is the promoter of the BIG TRAIN SHOW. George L. Carter was a local entrepreneur who died in 1936. He was very involved with RRs and coal mining in SW VA and eastern TENN and founded what eventually became ETSU in 1911. The Museum opened in 2007 and features model train layouts in several scales. Here is a picture of the HO layout.



The Museum is also home to a **NRHS Chapter** and to the **East Tennessee & Western NC RR [the Tweetsie] Historical Society's** HO<sub>N3</sub> layout that was superb.

We headed to Bristol TENN/VA. I have long wanted to visit there and this was the other reason for this trip. Bristol is somewhat unique in the border between TENN and VA runs rights down the middle of State Street. Things became absurd during the covid pandemic as restaurants in TENN were open while those across the street in VA were closed. We visited the **Birthplace of Country Music Museum** that celebrates the historic **1927 Bristol Sessions**, when a NYC record exec came down and made what were the first live recordings of country music with an electric microphone.

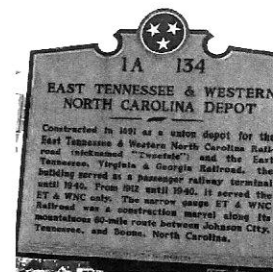
Next, we headed to Bristol's historic **Union [Norfolk & Western and Southern] Train Station** that was built in 1902. Restored in 2009, it now is an event venue [it was set up for a wedding]. However, there have been efforts to extend **AMTRAK** service to there from Roanoke VA, some 150 miles to the east.



While walking down the station's platform, a **Norfolk Southern** train pass by. The first part was intermodal traffic but much of the consist was mixed merchandise freight cars.



Back to Johnson City, the next day we saw the union passenger depot once used by the narrow gauge **Tweetsie** and the standard gauge



**ETV&G RR.** The building has been nicely restored housing a taco shop in the depot and a brew pub in what was the freight house in the back. Interestingly, the first 13 miles of the **Tweetsie** were dual-gauged. Part of the railroad still exist to Elizabethton, [albeit just standard gauge] as the **East Tennessee Railway**, part of the **Genesee & Wyoming** family of short lines.

Near bye is an ex-SR freight house soon to be a new Visitor Center.



Driving back, we passed thru Ervin TENN, once the center of operations for the **CLINCHFIELD RR**, with 300 miles of track from the coal fields of VA and KY thru TENN and NC to the textile mills of SC. Long controlled by **L&N** and the **ACL**, it was sucked up into **CSX** and soon lost its identity. The former station there is now the public library and nothing is left of what was once the **CLINCHFIELD's** major yard.

