



CINDERS



DECEMBER 2020

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 PHILADELPHIA CHAPTER OF THE NRHS
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WEST CHESTER TRAIN RIDE

-Tom Fluck

After a (limited but rewarding) family Thanksgiving dinner, the next day was Black Friday. I was in need of some Rail Time! So, I went to the **West Chester Railroad** website to see what was available. Saturday trains were sold out, but I was able to buy a ticket for the 11:00am Sunday *Santa Express* for \$30.00 plus \$3.00 handling charge. I arrived early at Market Street in West Chester, and just missed the unloading of the earlier *Christmas Tree Train*. The train disappeared back to the train yard to remove the flat car, used for the pick-up of Christmas trees for those riders.



Soon after, the train rolled in. A GP-35 headed the consist. I soon introduced myself to the train crew and requested a cab ride. The conductor said that it was OK if it was OK with

the engineer. The engineer, Kevin and his senior partner Skip said join us on the return trip. Great! I did not need to visit with Santa, so I asked the conductor Pedro if I could ride out to Glen Mills in the pushed coach (control) cab, to enjoy the views...Yes! A Great Ride!

Ending at Glen Mills, the historic Glen Mills Station (museum) was open for a brief tour. Returning from Glen Mills to West Chester, I had the privilege of a cab ride in the GP-35 heading the consist. I also met with Larry, whom with Skip are two of the founding members of the current **West Chester Railroad**. Also, assistant conductor Beth was kind and informed me that I became a member of the **West Chester Railroad** (only \$30.00 per year) that I can ride for free, as long as there is space available. So, yes, I will become a member, and perhaps a volunteer! Another great day riding the rails!

PRESIDENT/EDITOR EMERITUS MESSAGE

- R. L. EASTWOOD, JR.

We’ve reached the point in the tumultuous year 2020, where we can reflect on our past year and hopefully look forward to a better 2021 for the industry whose history we record, as well as our own personal families and the effect that COVID-19 has had on all of us.

Philadelphia Chapter last had an in-person meeting on Thursday, February 20, 2020. Due to capacity constraints imposed on the Chapter, it appears that this restriction may continue into the early part of the new year. To compensate, we have done, as have others, in producing “ZOOM” meetings. We have several ZOOM formats available early into 2021. We have found between 35 and 45 people have tuned in each month, many from out of our immediate area.

Throughout 2020, we have published CINDERS to keep you posted as best we could, even issuing a 12th issue in August to help keep up. Throughout the year, we transitioned to a new Editor to replace me; the change has gone through a few “slow orders” but continues to improve looking into 2021. Kevin Feeney has diligently worked hard to produce a good newsletter.

In our coverage area, SEPTA’s website suffered a serious meltdown this past summer, significantly limiting some information available to us. Fortunately, the Authority was able to restore a decent level of passenger information. Amtrak has gone through an upheaval which has confused its greatly reduced ridership because of continuous scheduling changes. Meanwhile, we continue to record these challenging times to the industry we love, hoping to see improved ridership statistics in 2021, together with improved health for each of you and your families. We can hope for nothing less.



...

In-person Chapter meetings are CANCELLED for the foreseeable future. We plan to hold monthly "ZOOM" meetings with logo in info available in the monthly issues and on our website. Log in info for our December meeting appears in the middle of the right column. Please bear with us during these continuing uncertain times.

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:

www.nrhsphiladelphia.org

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ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES:

Effective September 1, 2020, dues are \$20.00 per person, which covers Philadelphia Chapter thru Dec. 31, 2021. (NRHS National membership dues for 2021 are \$50.00, billed directly by NRHS.) NRHS chapters bill members separately for Chapter dues.

Anyone interested in becoming a member of Philadelphia Chapter, NRHS should forward remittance in the amount of \$20.00, payable to:

Philadelphia Chapter, NRHS
Post Office Box 7302
Philadelphia, PA 19101-7302.

Please be sure to include name, complete mailing address, telephone number and E-mail address.

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.)

Also contact the Editor Emeritus if your copy does not arrive or arrives in a damaged condition.

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Chapter ZOOM Meeting for December 2020

Thursday 12/17 at 7pm ET

[https://zoom.us/j/91854925138?pwd=Z2oyU1B4c](https://zoom.us/j/91854925138?pwd=Z2oyU1B4cXgrRGo2SmdadFo5TVVOUT)

[XgrRGo2SmdadFo5TVVOUT](https://zoom.us/j/91854925138?pwd=Z2oyU1B4cXgrRGo2SmdadFo5TVVOUT)

Meeting ID: 918 5492 5138

Passcode: 699386

Or Dial by your location

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Upcoming Local Events

The **Rockledge Model Railroad Museum** [aka **GATSME**] at 323 Montgomery Ave. in Rockledge, PA should be open to the public on Saturday Dec. 12th and Sunday Dec. 13th from Noon to 3 PM both days. Going forward, the club expects to continue being open on 2nd Saturday of each month, with possible additional dates in 2021. Visitors are asked to confirm the open house dates on its web site or Facebook page before traveling there.



FRANK G. TATNALL, JR.



SEPTA expects a shortfall of about \$350 million in operating revenue by the time the current fiscal year ends next June, a result of the horrendous loss of ridership in the COVID-19 pandemic. This was one of the revelations from General Manager Leslie Richards in an interview with the Inquirer last month. Transit ridership in October was down about 70 percent from pre-pandemic levels and Regional Rail carried some 85 percent fewer riders.

While SEPTA thus far has been relatively conservative in its cost-saving measures, Richards warned that, absent substantial Federal relief in the short term plus long-term funding solutions, more extreme steps may be taken. These would include service cuts, layoffs and fare increases. “I cannot state clearly enough that every option will be considered,” Richards said. support from Washington, however, would only be a “Band-Aid” because the agency still faces deep-rooted funding issues. Thus far SEPTA has spent nearly \$150 million of the \$644 million it received from last spring’s CARES Act, most of it used to cover labor expenses. To date, SEPTA has not furloughed any full-time employees. Richards has joined with other transit executives nationwide in calling for at least \$32 billion in additional Federal relief funding, which is seen as a “bridge” to get “to the other side of this pandemic”.

SEPTA has been forced to spend more money on its Key Card fare collection system, this time to continue supporting the Customer Call Center and to replace the hand-held devices used by Regional Rail conductors. The additional expenditure of \$14.4 million represents the 24th time that the primary Key installation contract has been changed since the project began in 2011. With the recently announced plan to provide Key cards to 60,000 school students, this latest action brings the total cost of the Key Card system to \$207.7 million (see October *Cinders*).

There will be no “jolly trolleys” running this holiday season on Route 15 Girard Avenue, because the distinctive PCC II cars have been taken out of service for heavy maintenance. SEPTA says that the trolleys will return by 2022 but that is far from certain. Fortunately, a group of local artists got together to create a colorful plywood “jolly trolley” to resemble the real PCC’s decorated each year by SEPTA employees. With painted figures of well-known passengers

appearing behind the windows, the “trolley” will be displayed at 31st Street & Girard until early January... General Manager Leslie Richards is one of the transportation executives recognized by *Railway Age Magazine* in its “Women in Rail” issue for November.

A \$15.9 million Federal grant to SEPTA, AMTRAK and PennDOT announced last month will help fund the long-planned upgrade of the signal system between Overbrook and Paoli. These 14.5 miles are home to an historically significant but antiquated signal system, featuring tracks signaled in only one direction (Operating Rule 251) and manned signal towers at “Overbrook” and “Paoli”—among the last of their kind in the entire country. While the announcement does not spell out the details, the grant evidently will pay for conversion of the signal system to Rule 562 operation, which permits trains to run on cab signal indication only in either direction on any track. This would result in the removal of all fixed signals except home and distant signals at interlockings, as well as closure of the lineside towers. Most of the Harrisburg line west of Paoli is already operated under Rule 562.

PennDOT is finalizing a study on the feasibility of restoring rail passenger service over NORFOLK SOUTHERN rails between Norristown and Reading. The proposed service, which would be tied into SEPTA’s Manayunk-Norristown line, has been championed by officials in Phoenixville and by a group in the Reading area (see November *Cinders*)...Train service on the Airport Line was suspended for several hours in the morning and afternoon of Monday, November 9, due to downed wires on the line...The South Philadelphia plant where Hyundai Rotem assembled the Silverliner V cars has been up for lease since last year. According to an Internet report Amazon has now leased the building for use as a distribution center.

For the first time in memory, there was only a modest increase in AMTRAK ridership over the Thanksgiving holiday. Normally this is the busiest travel time of the year, but in the middle of the COVID-19 crisis everyone was being urged to stay



home. Instead of running many extra trains on the Northeast Corridor and elsewhere as it usually does at this time, Amtrak scheduled only one extra Acela Express round-trip on Sunday, November 29, between Boston and Washington and one extra Acela round-trip between New York and Washington. Unneeded were the commuter trains often leased for extra Corridor service and no special timetable was

issued for the seven-day Thanksgiving period.....One casualty of the downturn in Amtrak and SEPTA ridership is Bridgewater's Pub at 30th Street Station, which closed for good last month. It had been serving meals and a wide selection of beer to travelers for the past 21 years.

Despite the CDC's advice that people stay home, airlines did enjoy their highest ridership over the Thanksgiving holiday weekend since the pandemic began. On Sunday the 29th around 1.2 million passengers were screened at U.S. airports, the most on any day since COVID-19 overspread the country but far below the 2.8 million passengers who traveled on the Sunday after Thanksgiving last year. Philadelphia International Airport officials said that as of October passenger traffic at PHL is down 63 percent for the year, and Thanksgiving holiday traffic was expected to be 56 percent less than last year.

Longtime AMTRAK Exec Stephen Gardner has been named as the new president of AMTRAK, effective December 1. President & CEO William Flynn, who has been with the railroad for only a year, will now split his responsibilities, continuing only as CEO. Gardner will retain the duties of heading day-to-day operations as well as marketing, government affairs and other functions that he oversaw in his previous position as senior executive vice president.

The FRA last month issued a final rule governing the performance and service quality of intercity passenger rail service. This rule codifies the law passed many years ago that requires freight railroads to give passenger trains operating on their lines preference over freight traffic—a law often contested by the Association of American Railroads and which twice has reached the U.S. Supreme Court. The new rule finally provides an enforcement mechanism for on-time performance, establishing a minimum standard that 80 percent of passengers on a given train should arrive at their destination stations within 15 minutes of their scheduled arrival. The AAR, however, may try again to block enforcement of the new rule.

A headline in the December 1 edition of the *Inquirer* read "AMTRAK eyes adding Scranton-to-N.Y. route." Amtrak's interest is somewhat surprising, to say the least. Scranton-area politicians have been hawking this fanciful proposal for years, and now it appears in an Amtrak-generated plan for the possible future expansion of its system. If this idea ever comes to fruition, it will only be after some 22 miles of the famed Lackawanna Cutoff is restored between Andover, NJ, and Slateford Junction, PA, from which CONRAIL lifted the rails in the 1980s.



As the December 31 deadline nears officials of NJ TRANSIT told their board last month that installation of Positive Train Control was 80 percent complete and the year-end goal would be achieved. But a few days later, the Federal Railroad Administration named NJT as the only commuter rail line in the country that was "at risk" of not meeting the deadline. NJT has installed PPE vending machines at Newark Penn, Hoboken Terminal, Secaucus Junction, Metropark and New Brunswick, with more planned.

In short-line news, STRASBURG RAIL ROAD has been granted a \$350,000 to \$1 million government "PPP" loan. WILMINGTON & WESTERN in Delaware is facing some hard times, with tourist ridership in the 2020 season of less than 15,000 compared with the 50,000 anticipated before the pandemic struck. Like the Strasburg, W&W also rosters a steam locomotive but most frequently uses older diesel switchers. JUNIATA TERMINAL has scrapped the old equipment that was stored in front of its North Philadelphia shop and viewable from the AMTRAK main line. Among the vanished equipment was a derelict ex-B&O, ex-Amtrak E9 that had been stripped of parts, for possible use on the two pristine ex-Pennsy E8's stored inside the shop.

The historic [1879-vintage] pony truss bridge that carried Howellville Road over the NORFOLK SOUTHERN's Dale secondary track (ex-Pennsy Trenton Cut-off) near Berwyn has been removed. The trusses on the bridge, which was originally built for the Northern Central Railway and still carries a builder's plate to that effect, will be relocated for use on the Marsh Creek Greenway near Wellsboro, PA. A new bridge over the railroad will be built (Rick Bates).



After a very tough 2020, I wish all of our loyal readers a wonderful Christmas and Hanukkah, and—of course—a much more enjoyable and productive New Year!
---- Frank Tatnall, Jr.

PHILADELPHIA EXPRESS EXTRA SECTION

---- Frank Tatnall, Jr.

AMTRAK Aims to Halt COVID Slump

After Rough 2020 Railroad Looks for Ridership Boost



After reporting dismal results for Fiscal Year 2020, Amtrak said last month that it foresees that ridership and revenue in FY 2021 will improve to about 37 percent of pre-COVID-19 levels. In the

final months of FY 2020 ending September 30, Amtrak trains were carrying an average of only 20 percent of their normal ridership.

Preliminary figures for FY 2020 reveal an operating loss of \$801.1 million, in stark contrast to the pre-pandemic forecast of a near break-even performance for the railroad. If the massive disruption of the coronavirus had not occurred, that could have been financially the most successful result in the railroad's 49-year history. But in the real-world of 2020 operating revenues for the year sunk to \$2.3 billion, a decrease of 31.9 percent from the previous fiscal year.

Among other unsettling results for the past 12 months was the fact that only 16.8 million customer trips were made, a loss of 15.2 million riders year-over-year. This represented an overall decline of 47.4-percent. Of special significance was the 52.5-percent drop in Acela ridership and the 48.5-percent ridership loss in Northeast Regional service. Also in the Philadelphia area, Keystone service to and from Harrisburg was off by 49 percent (which partly reflects the two months last spring when the service was completely shut down). Long-distance trains lost 39.2 percent of their riders.

All of this presents a serious challenge for incoming Amtrak President Stephen Gardner, who as a veteran executive at the railroad is no doubt completely familiar with the dire situation. At the end of the day the most critical element may be the level of funding that Amtrak receives from Congress. One hopeful sign in early December was a bipartisan, \$908 billion COVID-19 relief bill being considered in the Senate, which would allocate

\$1 billion for Amtrak and \$15 billion for the nation's-stricken transit systems. Under this measure assistance would be provided for the next four months, giving Congress and the incoming Biden administration time to consider further aid for later in 2021.

CSX Makes Surprise Bid for Pan Am

NS Already in Venture with New England System

CSX last month announced its intention to purchase regional carrier Pan Am Railways, which operates



about 1,700 miles of former Boston & Maine and Maine Central lines across New England. This

would significantly expand CSX's coverage in the region, which already includes the competing ex-New York Central/Conrail main line between Albany, NY, Springfield, MA and Boston. The proposed purchase would allow CSX to directly serve many additional



Pan Am
Railways

customers in Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine. Last June, Pan Am, formerly known as Guilford Rail

System, said that it was for sale.

The CSX announcement brought an immediate response from competitor Norfolk Southern, which now has a 50-50 joint venture agreement with Pan Am, known as Pan Am Southern. The joint venture deal provides NS with trackage rights as far east as Ayer, MA, giving it access to the Boston area. So if CSX buys Pan Am, it would automatically receive half ownership of Pan Am Southern.

CSX's acquisition of Pan Am is subject to approval by the Surface Transportation Board, the Federal agency with jurisdiction over such matters. NS said that it will oppose CSX's purchase that, even if approved, might result in additional trackage rights for NS through northern New England.

Editor's note: Timothy Mellon, owner of Guilford Transportation, purchased the name, colors, and logo of Pan Am at its bankruptcy auction in 1998 reportedly for \$350,000.

Considering making any end-of-year donations to charities?

Kevin Feeney [retired CPA]

Readers may not be aware of a special tax break that applies only for 2020. The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (**CARES Act**) was signed into law on March 27, 2020. The **CARES Act** created new tax benefits for donors to nonprofits such as the **Philadelphia Chapter, NRHS** and other railroad groups that are 501c3 organizations. Because of COVID shutdowns and the like, many historical RR groups are hurting financially and really need our donations this year more than ever.

First, donors who *itemize* can deduct cash contributions to **Philadelphia Chapter, NRHS**, and most other public charities to offset up to 100% of their income. Ordinarily, the income tax charitable deduction for cash gifts is limited to 60% of income. The 100% limit effectively may allow especially generous donors to reduce their 2020 Federal Income Tax to zero. Second, those who are even more generous can carry-forward unused cash contribution deductions for up to five years. This makes it easier for very generous supporters to make a gift of a lifetime to our Chapter or other deserving organizations.

If you *don't itemize*, you can take the standard deduction AND still reduce your 2020 taxable income by up to \$300 per taxpayer for cash gifts made to public charities by using an one-time “above the line” adjustment on line 10b. While most

required minimum distributions (RMDs) from retirement plans have been eliminated for 2020; those aged 70½ or older can still make a qualified charitable distribution (QCD, or IRA charitable rollover) of up to \$100,000 to public charities from their IRA. While using a QCD in 2020 does NOT go against the RMD, never-the-less, a QCD remains a great way to make tax advantageous gifts, especially if the donor does not itemize deductions.

PLEASE NOTE: THE ABOVE INFORMATION IS PROVIDED AS A SERVICE TO MEMBERS AND DOES NOT CONSTITUTE TAX OR LEGAL ADVICE.

Obituary for Albert J. Kallfelz Longtime Central New York Chapter Officer



SYRACUSE, NY-----Albert J. Kallfelz, Jr., of Camillus, NY passed away on November 24, 2020 at his home following a long illness. Al was 85 years of age. A native of Syracuse, Kallfelz graduated from Smith Technical High School and Syracuse University’s College of Engineering. During and after his college years, he served in the New York National Guard. His family owned the former Kallfelz Brothers Baking Company, one of the largest commercial bakeries in upstate New York. He was a communicant of St. Joseph’s Church in Camillus.

After graduation, Kallfelz worked at Smith Corona as a mechanical engineer, and shared some patents on typewriter design. When the Company moved to Cortland, NY, Al joined Carrier Corporation, where he spent the rest of his career. At Carrier, he shared several more patents on machines that built air conditioners. As a boy traveling with his parents on business and pleasure trips, Al developed a lifelong interest in railroads. That passion led to his membership in the Central New York Chapter, NRHS. Except for a brief interval, he served as chapter president for more than 50 years, possibly making him the longest serving leader of an NRHS chapter. He was instrumental in the Central New York Chapter’s purchase in 1966 of Martisco station in the Town of Camillus from the New York Central Railroad and had worked tirelessly on the station museum since.

In addition, he offered encouragement and guidance as a mentor to generations of young train enthusiasts over the years. For many years, Al was an Emergency Medical Technician with WAVES Ambulance. He had been a caregiver for his mother in her later years. A special memory for Al was his 1994 trip to his family ancestors’ homes in Germany. Private services will be held at Assumption Cemetery, Syracuse, with a celebration of life at a later date. Contributions in his memory were requested to Central New York Chapter, NRHS, Inc., Post Office Box 229, Marcellus, NY 13108-0229. Funeral arrangements by B. L. Bush & Sons Funeral Home, 10 Genesee St., Camillus, NY 13031. Please sign his guestbook at www.BLBush.com.

Roadside America Closes Permanently After 85 Years

By JON HARRIS of the Allentown, PA Morning Call

Roadside America, the well-known tourist spot off I-78 in Berks County, is permanently closing after 85 years in business, ending the run of a pint-size wonderland that offered a panorama of life in the rural U. S. that included painstakingly detailed buildings, trains and waterways. Billed as the “World’s greatest indoor miniature village,” **Roadside America** searched for a buyer for nearly three years, hoping to find someone willing to continue the business. The Shartlesville attraction had been temporarily closed since mid-March due to the coronavirus pandemic but had hoped to reopen.

The 7,000-square-foot exhibit, with a mini-airport, coal mine, movie theater, mountain resort and much more, was



drawing about 36,000 visitors annually as of 2018, lower than the visitation it once used to see. Featured in books such as *1,000 Places to See in the USA and Canada Before You Die*, **Roadside America** remained largely unchanged since Creator Laurence Gieringer died in 1963. Dolores Heinsohn, Gieringer’s granddaughter, redid some of the trees in the 1990s because they were in disrepair.

With the decision to close, **Roadside America** said it is planning an auction that will consist of all display pieces, including buildings, bridges, figures, and animations. **Roadside America** said it will share auction details on its Facebook page in the coming weeks. “We feel it is the appropriate time to provide an update, and we appreciate your patience over the past six months. It is with heavy hearts that we announce the permanent closure of **Roadside America** after 85 years of business”, the Facebook post said.

AMTK #176 on Nov. 10, 2020

by Kevin Feeney

I traveled again from 30th Street to New London CT, near where my oldest daughter lives. 30th Street was a bit less busy than my similar stop there on Oct. 21st. However, there was some excitement in the great hall while eating my lunch and waiting for my train.

For some unknown reason, a young man across the bench from me started to take off his clothes. An AMTRAK policeman came over and told him to put his shirt back on. The man complied, but after the officer left, he mumbled some derogatory remarks also saying he had a knife. Another man walking past got into an argument with him, and he repeated the bit about having a knife. Well the other man walked away, but told what happened to another AMTRAK policeman. That officer approached the crazy man who denied saying he had a knife. I was standing right there and told the officer I heard him say it repeatedly.



The officer said, “put your arms behind your back and you’re under arrest”. The man resisted and from nowhere four AMTRAK police were there and boom—took him down! Once under control, the arresting officer with hat crooked, walked him away, but said to the other officers “I need those two”, pointing to me and the other man.

Next thing you know I am being walked up the SEPTA ramp to the AMTRAK police office at the top right. Certainly, I never have been there before! Inside, I could see one officer sitting at bank of TV monitors that covered the whole station. No doubt he signaled some type of alarm when he saw the altercation in the great hall. I was asked to provide a written statement and mentioned I had a picture of the man taking off his shirt [above], which I texted to the officer watching the monitors.

My train ride up the Northeast Corridor to NLC was totally uneventful.

Follow up from OCTOBER ISSUE:

This issue mentioned two passenger cars from a former restaurant in Ft Washington were available for free. Member Joe Boscoe, now living in Charleston SC, sent in an email about the cars.

“Years ago, I lived in that area (and also worked in Ft Washington Industrial Park for a while) and dined at The Coach Inn many times. I believe the cars first arrived in the early 1960s and during delivery the roofs were removed in order to clear the then low RT 309 overpass on Commerce Drive.

The first photo shows four cars lined up in Feb 1985. The closed rounded observation car on the far left was called Elysian Fields (per the restaurant, I believe, and not necessarily the railroad), The next car was a combine, which name I do not remember. The third from left carried the name Ambler perhaps of local railroad heroine Mary Ambler. The last car, on the right, was an open observation car reportedly used by General Dwight D. Eisenhower. I had heard that it supposedly was of PRR origin.

The second photo was taken January 12, 1991 as the cars were being cut up. Until the CraigsList announcement, I always thought all four cars were destroyed on site. Obviously, not so. It will be interesting to see what happens next”.

Research by our distinguished Editor Emeritus, thru back issues of *CINDERS*, found the only mention of the Coach Inn equipment was in January, 1991, when Frank Tatnall’s column said that “ex-Pennsy Business Car #90 was scrapped on site in December, 1990”.

The 3rd picture was taken by your Editor on Nov. 5, 2020. Comparing this imagine to the first one above, it seems that only the two cars on the right were scrapped in 1990. Apparently the two on the left stayed in place for almost another 30 years. The current restaurant there is actually located in the adjacent Best Western Hotel and is called **Palace of Asia PA**, serving Indian cuisine.