



The PLS GAZETTE

A Newsletter of the Pennsylvania Live Steamers, Inc.

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Green Signals Ahead

Now that we are getting into the Spring/Summer season it's time to review our current open PLS Projects List. Please remember this list is not all inclusive and only represents projects that were voted on and approved by the membership or were identified by the BOD as needed to maintain our property and assets. It is fair to say that from week to week item (projects) come up that need immediate attention resulting in a quick fix or resolution i.e. if a gutter falls off one of our buildings, it needs to be fixed NOW! The Project List has been a part of all PLS Membership Meeting for the past several years and its purpose is to give visibility to what projects are being worked on, which ones need planning and those that need a Lead Person. Once a Project Leader had been determined, that person becomes the go-to guy or gal that other members can go to and offer their help in assisting with that particular project. Members might also want to offer their expertise and volunteer to become the Project Leader.

PLS Projects priority list – As it appears on the monthly BOD and Membership Meeting agenda:

1. 1" Switches and Signals Brown Box thru mainline past 1" station – Lead: Ron Henderson – Frank Webb
2. Backhoe lean-to east side of Bldg. 3 – Leader: Need lead for this project
3. Caboose paint restoration – Lead: Bob Morris

4. 4 ¾" track repair – Ongoing repair of 4 ¾" track is underway
Lead: Jim Miller
5. Multi-Gauge track work – Henry Blanco White
6. Gauge 1 track refurbishment –
Lead Mike Moore **COMPLETED**
7. Cross buck on North side of property needs clean up and paint. Consideration should be given to moving this railroad item to a more favorable location – Lead: Bob Hillenbrand
8. PLS Library – We have a valuable Library resource that needs exposure to our membership – Lead Joe Gotlewski
9. 7 ¼ inch track merge at Rahns station to be returned to original configuration – Lead: Lee Nonnemacher
10. Building S repair – T-111 and Door needs woodworking and paint – Lead: TBA

As can be seen in the above list we have a good number of identified projects. Project No. six (6) on the list has been completed, but the balance remain open. Here are a few highlights of what's going on.

Project one (1) is nearing completion. When completed the 4 ¾" main loop around the railroad will have full signal coverage of the main line track. Project Leader: Ron Henderson

Project Two (2) lean-to for backhoe, has not been started and needs a Project Leader. Open tasks, prepare final costed bill of material, refine drawing, submit request for building permit, get team together to erect lean-to.

Project Three (3) Caboose painting. See Bob Morris for work detail, first order of business sand and prime south side, one panel completed, see caboose. It looks like we will be do the painting because of the high cost of using a contractor.

Project Four (4) on-going maintenance of 4 ¾" gauge track, level track, replace rotted/split ties, maintain roadbed. Project Leader Jim Miller

Project Five (5) restoration of multi-gauge track. Many ties need to be replaced and roadbed needs to be build up with soil and more stone. Switch tie replacement in the fall after the railroad is closed for the season. Project Leader: Henry Blanco White

Project Six (6) COMPLETED

Project Seven (7) full size cross buck and light is being cleaned up. Looking for recommendations on a new location on PLS property, new foundation will need to be poured. Project Leader: Bob Hillenbrand

Project Eight (8) improve visibility and use of PLS Library. Book case holding books and railroad related DVD's has been unlocked for easy member access. Library and all of its assets needs more exposure. Project Leader: Joe Gotlewski

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2018 Spring Meet Kitchen Thank You

Thanks to everyone who contributed and worked at our Spring Meet. Plus the positive response to our plea for baked goods was very appreciated.

Among those who helped with set up and take down, volunteered in the kitchen, or donated baked goods were: Joe Gotlewski, Jim Gotlewski, Rich Poletto, Gayle Keir, Walt Mensch, Jim Salmons, Hank Riley, Rose Ann Wagner, Sue Borders, Ginny Morris, Cindy Smelser, Paul Rice, Bob Morris, Lee Nonnemacher, Fred Daddi, Jenn Reinford, Dawn Kendter, Frank Webb, Bruce Saylor, Mary Saylor, Barry Shapin, Bruce Barrett, George Cooper, Mike Moore, Ross Magee, Sue Webb, Roy Nelson, Mary Ann Salmons, Lorraine Morris, Jenny Yost, Dick Moore, Carol Quirk, Dave Laird, and many others.

PLS is also grateful for continued support by the Philly Soft Pretzel Factory and Redner's Market.

Once again, Jay Shupard organized a successful Pot Luck Dinner on Saturday night. Thank you Jay and to all those who worked with you!

Kathy Parris

Kitchen Coordinator

Club Membership News

PLS welcomes new Associate Members: Jay Schrass, Diana Camasso, Paul Landis, Richard Grutzmacher, John Laughner, and G. Douglas Haring.

Upcoming Events

Sunday, June 24 Run Day - Members & Guests
Rain Date July 2

Saturday, July 14 **Annual PLS Picnic - 12:00 Noon**
(Train Rides will be available from 12:30 PM to 3 PM)
Picnic Rain Date Sunday, July 15

Sunday, July 22 Run Day - Members & Guests
Rain Date July 29

Saturday, August 18 Board of Directors Meeting - 9:30 AM
Membership Meeting - 12:30 PM
Afternoon/Evening Run (See Note)

Sunday, August 27 Run Day - Members & Guests
No Rain Date

Friday thru Sunday **Fall Meet - Members & Guests**
Aug. 31 to Sept. 2 *No Rain Dates*

Note: Rides may not be available at afternoon/evening run days following membership meetings due to possible limited participation by equipment owners. All members and their guests are welcome to attend with the understanding that rides are not guaranteed at these events.

Donation Acknowledgements

PLS wishes to thank the following for donations received during April and May: Ronald Hunter, Michael B. Yingling Sr, and the Becker Family Foundation.

Donations in memory of Bill Normart were received from Sheila Burnstein, Pat Lima, and Kathy Parris.



Membership Gauge

As of May 31, 2018 PLS has:

108 Regular Members

175 Associate Members

6 Honorary Members

Pennsylvania Live Steamers, Inc.

President	Frank Webb	77 Roundwood Circle, Collegeville, PA 19426	president@palivesteamers.org
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Project Nine (9) 7 1/4" track merge/re-alignment at 7 1/4" main station, return to original configuration. Track work is just getting started, it's not too late to give a hand. Project Leader Lee Nonnemacher

Project Ten (10) Building S repair. The west end T-111 siding and door need woodwork repair and paint. Project Leader is needed.

The above list has something for every skill set, electrical, painting, woodworking, track work, material moving, planning/document preparation, and a bit of good old shove work. I encourage all those interested in the PLS railroad in giving a hand to help get these and all short term projects completed. Or if you have another project in mind, let us know and we will get the BOD and Membership to review.

See you on the Mainline,

Frank Webb, President



2018 Spring Meet Special Thank You

I would like to thank you to all that helped make our Spring Meet a success. Without the participation of the membership these events would not be possible. To all that helped on the Gate, in the Kitchen and especially those that prepare the property I say THANK YOU! The weather this year was again as unpredictable as ever with lots of rain and wind just before the meet, making grass cutting and trimming difficult, but in the end the railroad looked very good. Although the threatening weather kept some away, those that did take a chance and traveled from out of town, state and country had a great time. Our Pot Luck Dinner once again headed up by Jay Shupard also turned out to be another success.

Frank Webb



Coming Soon!

Although 2021 sounds like it is a long way off, the 75th Anniversary of the Pennsylvania Live Steamers is coming soon. Send us your suggestions for activities that you would like to see at the Fall Meet in 2021 or during the entire 2021 anniversary year.

Think of vendors you would like to have on site. Games or contests that would be appropriate. Special events or demonstrations that fit the railroading theme. Be a part of this exciting gathering of live steam rail fans by offering your ideas for fun and/or educational programs.

We are awaiting your reply. Send your suggestions to:

LarryMoss@outlook.com

WHEN THE FEDERAL COULD NOT STOP PART 2

Well, it finally did, but . . .

by Bob Thomas

Rescue workers began arriving at first word of the impending tragedy as the *Federal*, running out of control due to loss of braking, crashed through the waiting room floor at Washington Union Station. Engineman Brower and Fireman Moyer emerged from the GG1 cab door somewhat bewildered by the devastation before them. They had escaped injury when 4876 crashed through the floor by sitting on the cab floor with their backs against a bulkhead. Moyer subsequently remarked that as 4876 lurched through a crossover (15 m.p.h. max.) at the entrance to Track 16, it rocked violently, riding first on one rail and then the other until it rapidly righted itself. That speaks volumes for the superb chassis design of those remarkable locomotives!

Railroad officials began assembling a fleet of ambulances from D.C and surrounding communities to stand-by at the station. Of 43 passengers taken to hospitals, only 6 had sustained serious injuries. There were no fatalities.

THE AFTERMATH.

The crash was extensively reported in local and national newspapers with varying degrees of *inaccuracy*. Mangled facts included an erroneous estimate by police of numerous deaths, wild tales by passengers of events that had not occurred, and traditional press confusion over the functions of the Conductor and Engineer on a railroad train. Reports referred to Train 173 as the *Federal Express*; when in fact, it was simply the *Federal*, an error that persists today. Perhaps the gravest mistake of all however, at least to a Pennsy fan, was a contemporary press report referring to the venerable GG1 as a Diesel. *Really!*

The PRR lost no time restoring Union Station to cope with the growing influx of visitors for Eisenhower's inauguration:

Cars remaining on Track 16 were re-railed as required and moved to a secure siding for later inspection. The two cars that followed the GG1 on its dive into the Baggage Room were removed by a railroad crane and the tilting GG1 was completely lowered to the Baggage Room floor for later attention.

Four hundred railroad employees were assembled for an immediate effort to simultaneously construct a temporary floor over the gaping hole in the waiting room floor, build barriers and ramps where needed, restore the news stand and station master's office for operation, and clean up the entire crash site. Union Station was re-opened for service just two days after the accident, three days before Dwight Eisenhower's inauguration. Prompt restoration also facilitated the former president's traditional departure from Washington immediately following the new president's inauguration. Harry Truman, who preferred to travel by train, departed with his family for their home in Independence Missouri at 6 pm from Union Station Track 16 – the very one that had been the scene of the *Federal* misadventure.

Separate investigations of the accident were conducted by the PRR, ICC and U.S. Senate. All three concluded that the one and only cause of the accident was unintended closure of the angle cock at the rear

of NH coach 8865 due to a design flaw. The closure of that valve isolated the brakes on the following thirteen cars from control by the head end, resulting in insufficient braking force to stop the long train. Those findings were confirmed by a test with a train having the same makeup as the *Federal*. The angle cock on the third car of the test train (a NH 8600-class Pullman-built coach) was again inadvertently knocked closed by repeated blows from the buffer pocket just as it had been on the ill-fated *Federal*. The ICC ordered New Haven to suspend all use of 8600-class coaches until modifications were made to preclude any possibility of unintentional closure of the angle cocks.

THE FATE OF GG1 4876.

Dust was still settling as PRR officials began to confront the problem of extracting 4876 from its resting place in the Baggage Room, one floor below track level. A crucial question in planning how 4876 would be removed was whether it would be more economical to rebuild it or just scrap it and build a new GG1. To answer that question a mechanical engineer from PRR Wilmington Shops made a survey of the damaged locomotive for a comprehensive report issued on January 28th. The answer to the question of "rebuild-or-scrap" was obvious from that report: Estimated cost to rebuild 4876 from new and



4876 under ownership of NJT in yard at Rahway, NJ circa 1982. Ripples in side sheets are exaggerated by the angle of the light.

salvaged parts, including labor, was \$233,300; cost of a new GG1 was \$450,000.

Contrary to most published reports, the wrecked GG1 was *not* simply cut up into three pieces for removal. Rather, it was meticulously disassembled into individual components, sub-assemblies, and various body sections which were removed through a side door in the Baggage Room and placed in a pile that stretched 90 feet long between two tracks in Washington Terminal yard.² All salvaged material was transported in five gondola loads to Altoona for major rebuilding at the PRR Juniata Shops. Installation of remaining mechanical details, signal and control gear, and repainting, was done at Wilmington. The “new” 4876 emerged from Wilmington in 5-stripe Tuscan Red and returned to service for several years until the livery was changed to the more prosaic PRR style of DGLE with an austere single broad stripe. After the PRR/NYC shotgun marriage 4876 endured the indignity of plain black finish and Penn Central’s over-size “Two Worms in Love” herald. After PC expired 4876 was acquired by Amtrak and then NJDOT, repainted in plain black, and operated along with sisters 4877 and 4879 on commuter lines in North Jersey until final retirement of all GG1s in 1983. NJT donated 4876 to the B&O Museum in Baltimore but lack of funds meant it had to

be stored outside with other derelict equipment owned by the Museum. Recent sightings of the famous locomotive on a siding in Baltimore, describe it as rusted away beyond repair, covered with graffiti, littered with trash inside, vandalized and stripped of anything thieves could carry away. Such a sad fate for this once-proud locomotive after six million miles of faithful revenue service.

REFERENCES

- 1 Martin, Robert, “Runaway GG1 4876 Crashes into Washington Union Station” PRRT&HS *The Keystone** Vol.37, No.4 (2004) 49-60
 - 2 Fry, Nick Goldfeder, “What Happened to GG1 4876 After the Union Station Wreck?” PRRT&HS *The Keystone** Vol. 48, No.3 (2015) 65-71
 - 3 Pablo Maurer, “Sixty Years After Barreling Through Union Station, GG1 4876 Rusts Away in Baltimore” PRRT&HS *The Keystone** Vol.46, No.3 (2013) 3-11
- * Much of this manuscript is based on articles published in *The Keystone*, a quarterly publication of the Pennsylvania Railroad Technical and Historical Society (PRRT&HS). Information concerning membership and benefits of the PRRT&HS is available on-line at: www.prrths.com/

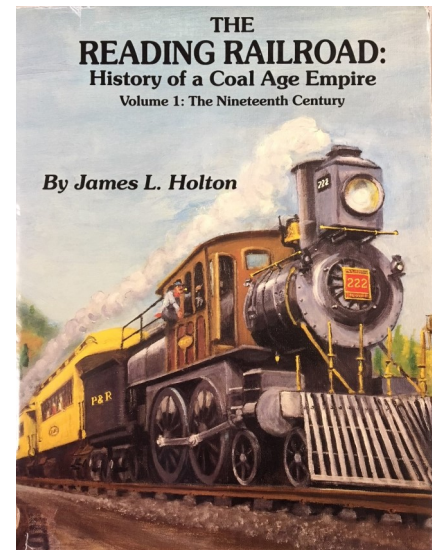


4876, vandalized and rotting in Baltimore, MD.
Photo by Bob Vogel, October 27, 2014

PLS Library

The PLS Railroad Library bookcase locks have been removed, allowing easier access to our collection of railroad histories, technical publications, magazines and DVD’s. Stop by the clubhouse and examine all the resources available to members. Expand your railroad knowledge.

Book of the Month



Book Review

Volume I covers the painful beginnings of the Reading RR as the impoverished company wins dominance over the hard coal trade by overcoming the competition of the powerful Schuylkill Canal and the turbulent period that followed until the close of the 19th century.

272 Illustrations

12 Color Plates

40 Maps

For information contact:

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Crossing Watchmen: Sentinels of Safety

by: Dave Taylor

Certainly the least glamorous, but I believe one of the most important jobs on the railroad was that of a crossing watchman.

My great-grandfather was a crossing watchman on the Cornwall and Lebanon Railroad. I have a black and white postcard size photograph of him standing in front of his assigned post, a small square building referred to at the time as a crossing watchman's "shanty". He is proudly holding two flags crisscrossed at waist level. It may have been an official photo or perhaps an itinerant photographer took it. I estimate that by factoring in my grandmother's age it may have been taken around 1870 or so. At the time, his only notice of a train approaching would have been the sound of a whistle and the sighting of a locomotive headlight. In later years after the introduction of block signals, wayside crank telephones and hydraulic gates, the crossing watchman's job became more sophisticated.

When I hired on as an extra Station Agent with the Reading Company in 1965, even though we had progressed to automatic gates in the Philadelphia Division, we still had crossing watchmen on duty around the clock at Langhorne, Lansdale and Ambler, Pennsylvania. All three watchmen were in later years mandated by the state of Pennsylvania as all three crossings were traversed by State routes.

The gates at Lansdale were operated from an elevated shanty affording the watchman a clear view of both Main Street (Route 63) and Broad Street. He had the ability to override the automatic gates in the event a fire engine or ambulance needed to safely cross the Doylestown and Bethlehem main tracks.

At Ambler, it was a common occurrence for North and South bound passenger trains to meet simultaneously at the station. The crossing watchman's shanty was at ground level just south of the station. On the side of his building a sign prominently stated, "Crossing watchman on duty 6:45

A.M. to 6:45 P.M. Monday thru Friday". Additionally, his duties required him to stand in the middle of the street and display a black and white round sign on a pole simply lettered "STOP" on both sides before the gates came down. He was required to stand there until all trains were clear of the crossing.

I don't know enough about the Langhorne operation other than all three watchmen locations ceased to operate sometime in the late 1990's by permission of the State.

This report would not be complete without writing about the railroad employees who manned the crossings.

When I was agent at Lansdale I distributed the paychecks and as a result was privileged to meet many dedicated employees.

For instance, there was a crossing watchman at Lansdale by the name of Mr. Fayash on third shift. He commuted to his job from Shamokin, Pennsylvania a distance of over 90 miles one way to work his 11:00 P.M. to 7:00 A.M. shift at the watchman's tower.

When he was picking up his paycheck one day I asked him how he could drive such a distance to work and then stay alert and awake all night. He said, "Next week I will show you".

When Mr. Fayash came to the ticket office the next week to pick up his paycheck he brought along with him a Bible and a ruled composition book. He opened the composition book to reveal to me how he stayed awake. He said, "I copy the Bible verbatim all night long and this helps me to stay awake". Mr. Fayash's devotion to duty was not uncommon among Reading Railroad employees.

Another employee of note was a man I only remember as "Sam". He also picked his paycheck up at my office.

Sam was assigned to the crossing watchman's shanty at Ambler. As noted earlier, his schedule was twelve hours a day, five days a week. His small watchman's building was well appointed (by railroad standards). He had an old oak swivel office chair, a potbellied stove for heat, a coffee pot and most importantly a railroad phone

which when he cranked (one long) he was in direct communication with the Dispatcher at Wayne Junction in Philadelphia. Outside the shanty there was a coal bunker filled with pea coal to fire up his stove. When a train would approach a bell would sound in the shanty and Sam knew it was time to grab the wooden pole with its metal "STOP SIGN", ascertain from what direction the train was coming from and stand between the gates while placing his sign in the pipe in the middle of Butler Avenue.

Like Mr. Fayash, Sam's devotion to duty was exemplary, but what made Sam a stand-out amongst his peers was his working attire.

If you saw Sam holding that sign in the middle of the street the uninitiated would have to guess that either the Mayor of Ambler or perhaps the President of the Reading Company was manning the gates that day.

You see, Sam's usual working clothing was a three piece suit, dress shirt and tie complete with a stick pin in the tie and shined dress shoes. I never saw him report for duty dressed any other way. Here was a guy who not only loved his job, embraced his craft, but wanted to represent the Railroad by looking his best.

A single man, he lived in Sellersville, PA about 15 miles from Ambler. Sam could be counted on to always be on time and I never knew him to miss a day's work.

By seniority, he was entitled to five weeks of vacation. So as not to be idle, Sam worked nearly every day of his vacation at an amusement park at Dorneyville outside of Allentown, Pennsylvania.

At Dorney Park he was assigned as operator of one of the largest Dentzel carousels in America. He would ring a big bell, put the merry-go-round in gear and hop on it while it was in motion to collect tickets. Sam loved this summer job. He was also proud of the fact that the owners of the park chose him to operate this major amusement because his railroad safety training kept the patrons safe.

Anyone who has ever ridden this carousel may remember beautiful old-time music

played by the wonderful 19th century era Wurlitzer band organ that filled the immense ornate round building with sound as the carousel spun around.

One can only imagine the big smile that surely appeared on Sam's face when the old Wurlitzer cranked out its familiar rendition of "I'VE BEEN WORK'IN ON THE RAILROAD".



Scenes Around the Track at the Spring Meet ...

Good weather brought out a nice crowd for the Spring Meet in May. Pictured at the right is a visiting engineer on his American style locomotive coming around the bend on the 1.5" gauge track.



Bottom left is John Forsyth's custom painted 1.5" gauge box car. The bottom right reveals the 1" gauge car barn filled with rolling stock ready to roll.



Pete Brown Photos



**The
PLS GAZETTE**

P.O. Box 26202

Collegeville, PA 19426-0202

FIRST CLASS



Annual PLS Picnic
Saturday, July 14th
Noon - 4 PM
Rain Date, July 15th

**We supply the
Hotdogs, Burgers
and Ice Cream...
You bring a Favorite
Dish and Beverage.**