

# The PLS GAZETTE

**A newsletter of the Pennsylvania Live Steamers, Inc.**

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## Green Signals Ahead

**A**s President of PLS, I have had the privilege of writing a front page article for more than 45 *PLS Gazettes*. Although I consider myself somewhat of a poor writer, I do my best to get out a message that is interesting, informative, amusing, PLS related and sometimes a little controversial. For those that take the time to read through my writings, I thank you. You may find something to your liking or just something to cast aside and for these reasons I try to keep the items and subjects varied. One subject I try to stay away from is politics as most often it has little to do with railroading and touching on political subjects can often make calm people uncomformable, angry and more outspoken, especially in today's world. With that said I would like to touch on a subject that everyone is growing very weary of and that is COVID-19, a subject that I find very distasteful, but none the less a subject that has had a significant impact on PLS over the past 16 months. The past is the past and now it's time to look forward to the future and face what ever may come, be it good or bad.

Back in March of this year, 2021, we put together a near normal calendar of events for the PLS run year. The only item that was taken off the calendar was the celebration of our 75th Anniversary that would have taken place

this fall. Recommended options were presented to our membership at the March Business Meeting and all agreed that a postponement until the fall of 2022 was the safest and best path to follow. Up until about 2 weeks ago it looked as if we might have made a mistake by canceling this year's anniversary meet as it seemed that COVID-19 was being managed and improvements preventing the spread of the virus looked as if it would continue to diminish. All was looking good and many of us seemed to become numb to the fact that COVID had killed more than 619,564 U.S. citizens.

COVID is not going away anytime soon and the resurgence is being called the pandemic of the unvaccinated. The unvaccinated make up 97% of the individuals that are contracting and spreading the virus at this time. The sad news is the virus is now showing up in more children, and especially in those under the age of 12 that cannot yet receive a vaccination. Thankfully the number of children infected is still a small number but is going up at an alarming rate.

OK... What does this all mean to PLS going forward? Our Federal and our State Government is doing little to nothing to give us guidance. The Feds are pushing the responsibly to the State Governors and for the most part the Governors are pushing it off to the local government with Mayors and

school leaders left to decide how to protect adults and children. The only organization that is making recommendations is the CDC and they are just a recommending body with no real policy authority. Larger cities like Philadelphia and its Mayor have given some guidance to their citizens, but at the county level guidance is a mixed bag, leaving it up to local officials to outline rules for masks, vaccination cards and COVID-19 testing. In some cases, it only involves local government buildings and places of business. Some large businesses have taken a stand and have given their employees and customers guidance in the use of masks and social distancing, and some small businesses have put rules in place to protect its employees and customers. However, there is no common plan.

I believe our best option is to prepare and publish a PLS COVID-19 Statement. It needs to be definitive and once the definitive elements are in place all PLS members, guests and visitors will have to adhere to the outlined requirements - no exceptions. Once PLS is in conformance we can apply the rules to all outside guest and visitors. I was working with the Officers and BOD members to generate a definitive COVID-19 Statement, the goal of which is to keep everyone safe and keep the virus away and out of PLS. Last year we were placed under shutdown and stay at home orders for

(Continued on page 3)

## Donations

PLS wishes to thank the following for donations received during June, July, and August: Pat Heller, Don Maleta, Richard McEnteer, Steve Leatherman, John Forsythe, Jim Meadowcroft, Sandra Carpenter, the estate of Hank Riley, Ken Chermak, Erich Boldt, Rob Kuhlman, Dave Rose, the Delaware Valley Triumph Car Club, and Nuprint Solutions.

## Check It Out

Members of PLS frequently donate items for us to sell. The club has recently received tools, books, art work, collectibles, etc. All money goes to PLS. Items are available at every Run Day. So be sure to stop by the Sales Table often, as the inventory is always changing.

While our official 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration has been postponed until Fall 2022, all anniversary commemorative items are on sale now. We have hats, T-shirts, mugs, magnets. And don't forget our PLS club pin for only \$5. There will be no re-ordering once items and sizes are sold out. Better buy now!

## Tentative Upcoming Events

Saturday, Oct. 16 Board of Directors Meeting - 9:30 AM  
**FALL CLEAN-UP in AM**

Membership Meeting - 12:30 PM

Sunday, Oct. 24 Run Day - Members & Guests  
(Rain Date October 31)

Saturday, Nov. 20 Board of Directors Meeting - 9:30 AM  
Membership Meeting - 12:30 PM

Friday, Nov. 26 Turkey Trot Run - Gauge 1 only  
(Rides not available)

Saturday, Dec. 11 Board of Directors Meeting—9:30 AM

**\*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.

## Club Membership News

PLS welcomes new Associate Members James Matz, Hans Bader, Cheryl Guffey, Girdharlal Sarodia, Richard McEnteer, and Chip Krout. Bonny Mallon and A. Bruce Daddi have applied for Regular Membership.



## Membership Gauge

As of September 30, 2021 PLS has:

**104 Regular Members**

**164 Associate Members**

**5 Honorary Members**

## Pennsylvania Live Steamers, Inc.

**President** Frank Webb 77 Roundwood Circle, Collegeville, PA 19426 president@palivesteamers.org

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many months. Small businesses and other groups were shut down and forced to close their doors as well. We now have a better understanding of how to protect ourselves and others around us. It is not likely that we will be forced into another shut down, but we are still at risk and at the present time that risk is fast moving and on the increase with no appearance of slowing down and it does not look like any mandates are coming anytime soon.

You might be asking why the action of a COVID-19 statement is important. It is important because we do not want any PLS member, visitor or guest to get sick and endure the possible outcomes so many others have faced. We have members that cannot afford to contract the virus and some that have weakened immune systems and are less able to fight off the virus even if they have been vaccinated. A large number of our members are older and it is unfair to expose them unnecessarily. We also have members with children that visit PLS and visitors that come from other clubs or by invitation. We will post our statement to the PLS website, send it out as a PLS BLAST and by mail to those that do not have internet service. Once we make PLS expectations known, compliance will become expected and respected.

I would be remiss if I didn't ask everyone that is not vaccinated and able to get a vaccination to get your shot(s) to protect against COVID-19. The vaccine is readily available. It is free and millions of people have shown the vaccine to be very safe and effective.

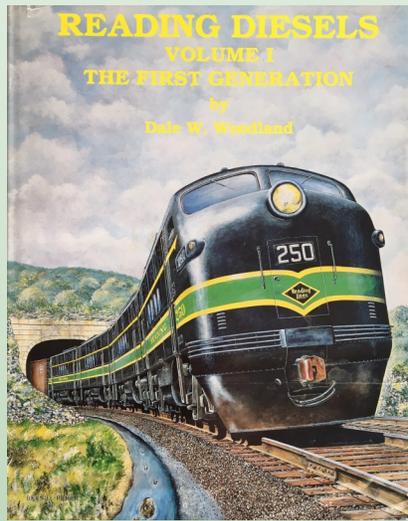
I look forward to seeing you at the PLS railroad.

*Frank Webb, President*



# PLS Library

## Book of the Month



### Book Review

In Volume 1, the reader will become acquainted with the fascinating variety of diesel locomotives on the Reading between 1926 and 1967.

Written by local author and PLS Member, Dale Woodland, the book contains 215 color photographs with some dating back to the late 1940's.

### For information contact:

Joe Gotlewski, Librarian  
joegotlewski@gmail.com

Please note that much of the PLS Library has been destroyed by water but the book above remains on file in the caboose.



# 2021

## Anniversary Merchandise

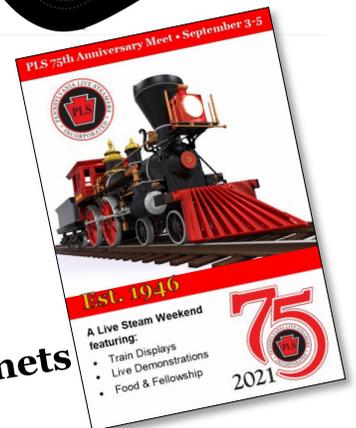
available at the

Sales Table at all Club Events

Pins



Hats



Magnets



Mugs

All proceeds benefit the 75th Anniversary Celebration

## New MOW Equipment

by Mark Cahill

Recently, another “long-ago” planned PLS project came to a successful conclusion. Several years ago, Bob Freer donated to PLS a “tow-behind” John Deere 24-gallon electrically operated weed sprayer (see photo). The sprayer comes with a hand-held sprayer wand, one fixed sprayer nozzle and 2 adjustable nozzles. The idea was to somehow mount the sprayer to a flat car or gondola car, tow it around the RR using the club locomotive and spray the right-of-way for weeds and other undesirable vegetation. Currently, Jim Miller and Paul Miller walk around the RR using shoulder-mounted sprayers. These get the job done but a tow-around sprayer would be much quicker, more efficient and require less physical work.

George Cooper jump started this project by donating a 7¼” “Virginian” gondola car for use as the carrying vehicle for the sprayer. George reached out to Mark Cahill to see if he would be interested in the project. Always looking for a challenge, Mark agreed to pursue the conversion of the sprayer.

The first step in the conversion process was to remove the single axle and wheels from the sprayer’s frame. The front half of the frame that contained the tow hitch was also removed. The dimensions of the sprayer were such that it would not fit on

the floor of the gondola car within the car’s side walls, so a platform was constructed that straddles the tops of the car’s side walls.

The sprayer and its frame were then mounted to this platform. Additionally, the frame was extended to accommodate a home-made battery tray. Bob Morris procured a 12VDC Deep Cycle Marine battery for use as the sprayer’s power source (see photo).

The original sprayer pump “ON/OFF” switch was failing. As it was not serviceable, a new switch was procured.

The final step was to provide a seat for a sprayer operator (it was deemed impractical to have the locomotive engineer operate the towing locomotive and the sprayer simultaneously). Mark donated a new low-back bass boat seat for use by the sprayer operator.

The completed sprayer mounted to the gondola car with the operator’s seat can be seen in the photos. It should be possible to orient the adjustable sprayer nozzles to cover all of the 7¼” track and most of the 4¾” track where it parallels the 7¼” track. Also, a stick with a screw eye attached at one end can be used by the operator to hook extra-long bolts on the adjustable sprayer nozzle arms and retract the arms when passing a close clearance obstruction such as a signal bridge or the tunnel. The adjustable sprayer nozzle arms can then be re-positioned once the obstruction is

cleared. No need for the operator to get out of his seat!

The battery is rated at 65 amp-hours. The sprayer’s electric pump draws 7 amps, so the battery should be able to power the pump for at least 9 hours before requiring re-charge. During testing, the rate of product consumption was approximately 1 gallon per minute. The sprayer has a 24-gallon capacity. At slow speed, it takes about 10 minutes to circumnavigate the RR. Therefore, there is a reasonable chance that a single 24-gallon sprayer load can spray the entire RR. The sprayer’s hand-held wand can be used to reach those places where the fixed sprayer nozzles cannot.

The only unfortunate issue with the completed sprayer car is storage. Storage testing indicated that the overall width of the sprayer car would foul any adjacent track in Building #6. The sprayer car would not clear the building sidewalls of any track in Building #3 and the height of the sprayer car would not clear the door of Building #9. Since the sprayer car will not fit into any track building, the alternative is to empty the sprayer tank, remove the battery from its tray, lift the sprayer assembly off of the gondola car and store it in Building “S”. The sprayer is a bit bulky but weight-wise, it is manageable by one person and easily lifted by two persons. The amount of effort to reinstall the sprayer onto the gondola car is minimal.



## Historic Flood Hits PLS

Ariel photo taken the morning after Tropical Storm Ida had passed. Skippack Creek rose a record 20 feet.

Water had receded about four feet when this picture was taken.

Drone Photo Courtesy of Roy Nelson



## Response to Tropical Storm Ida

(Letter to the Editor)

Dear PLS Members,

By now we have all been made aware of the unprecedented flooding on the property and the resulting extensive damage caused to the Club House and ancillary buildings. The good news is that in spite of the damage, the track and most of the running infrastructure of the railroad survived pretty well. This is no doubt due to the years of sturdy construction and adherence to track standards which is the mainstay of the club's existence.

On the flip side, the Club House has long been viewed as simply a utility building where we hold our meetings, perform all manners of planning, where the lavatories are located, where the workshop is located and until the flood, where most of the archival and related hobby library resided. As such it was always maintained at a minimal level and never given much of a second thought beyond as a place to meet and relieve ourselves. For example, only in the last couple of years has work on the roof been *discussed*.

Since the events of September 1, a new realization of things long ignored has now come to the forefront against our earnest wishes. With the flooding and subsequent gutting of the kitchen and meeting room, the Board of Directors have been tasked with a re-evaluation of priorities regarding the facilities. Do we just patch everything and accept this appearance and compromised functionality as the new norm? Or do we consider improvements that will address long-term maintenance issues, improve long term functionality of critical operating systems, and provide new comfort for everyone in the club regardless of whether one owns equipment or not? The Club House represents the common space where we can all meet and share a sense of belonging.

This is no easy task but in fact brings into sharper focus the reality that we no longer can rely fully on volunteer talent and skill sets due to time availability and attrition. Relying solely on what

volunteer labor we can summon to rebuild will add substantial time to the process. The fact is now that in order to upgrade and perform many tasks in a timely and safe manner, we need to secure proper professionals in critical skills to do those tasks where we once typically could do for ourselves.

But really any club evolves and priorities change. Did you know that we still maintain enough compressor capacity to accommodate firing up 25 or more steam locomotives - but now internal combustion is more often the norm - and that's OK! A club is reflective of the camaraderie surrounding the common love of an activity - not simply the equipment on which we choose to ride. However, the quality of construction and facilities we choose directly reflects on the membership's priorities and values. Any outsider - and their spouse - take this into consideration when visiting. Lack of funds and "garage" decorating are easy for anyone to recognize.

The Board of Directors are struggling to consider where and how to "value engineer" with limited funding; where we can do it ourselves and take more time to complete or where to invest in professionally installed upgrades that will leave a lasting legacy and reflect the pride of belonging.

This is the ONE CHANCE we have now, at this moment, if we are to keep the September's rescheduled 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary, to put our house in order. If you want to know more about the areas of improvement under consideration and can make a **meaningful monetary contribution** that creates a lasting legacy or lend a hand when the time comes for sweat equity, please contact any member of the Board of Directors or Officer. A GoFundMe page has been set up and any normal manner of contribution would be gratefully accepted towards this project.

Pat Murphy

# Record Flood Reeks Havoc at PLS

Henry Blanco-White

The Perkiomen Creek which runs adjacent to the PLS railroad was flooded to its highest point in recorded history following Tropical Storm Ida that arrived on Wednesday, September 1, 2021. By the following morning, all the buildings on the property were under water.

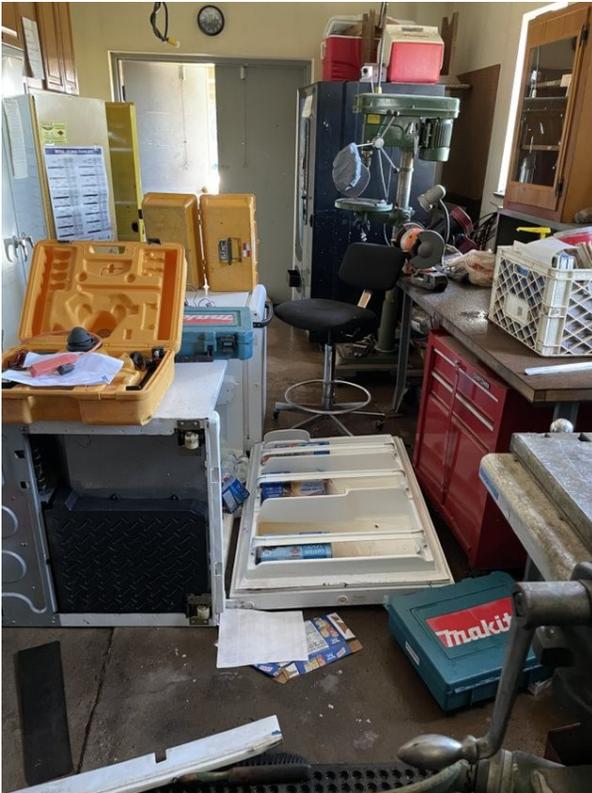
Here are just some of the scenes that awaited returning members...



Henry Blanco-White



Pat Murphy



Pat Murphy

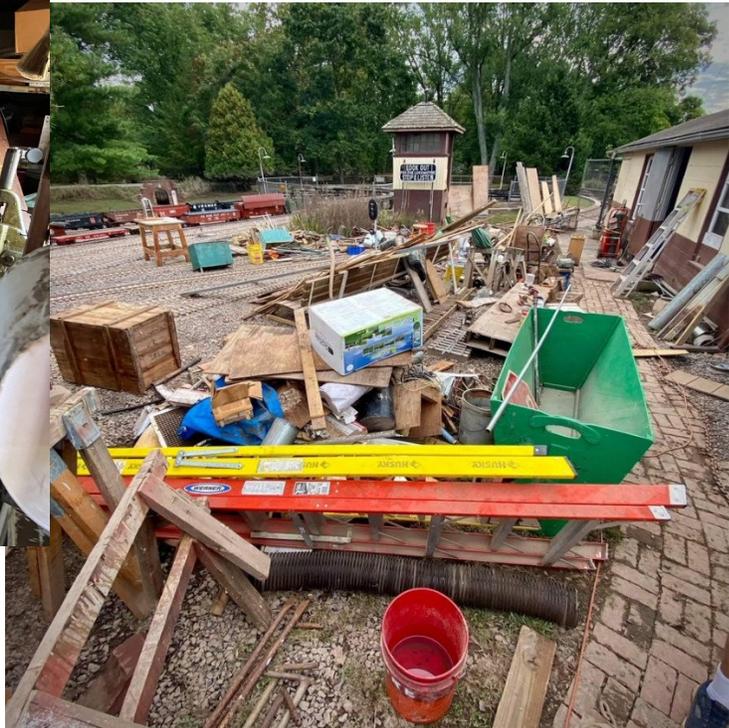


Pat Murphy

Pat Murphy



Pat Murphy



Larry Moss

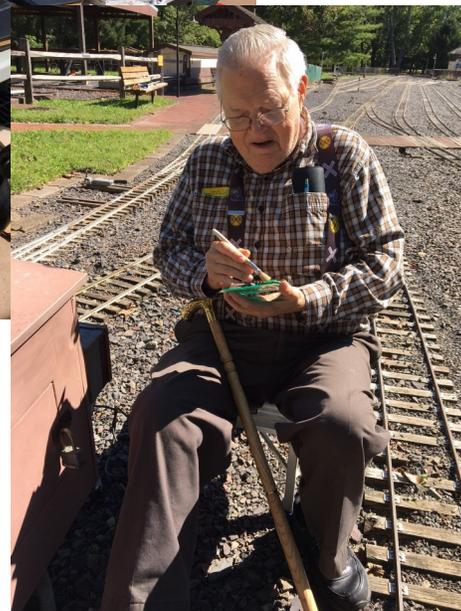


Larry Moss

Larry Moss



Pat Murphy





**The**  
**PLS GAZETTE**

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**FIRST CLASS**

