



Pennsylvania Railroad Technical & Historical Society LINES WEST – BUCKEYE REGION CHAPTER

Bulletin No. 2020-04 --- December 2020

The President's Corner

There had been plans to have a membership meeting in early December. However, with the drastic spike in the COVID-19 pandemic my feeling is that calling the group together at this time is not a wise thing to do, and would conflict with the government restrictions on meetings of large numbers of people in a closed location. With that in mind, we will defer the December meeting to another time. This will be a month to month decision and we will inform you by newsletter when we can safely schedule a membership meeting. Hopefully we can meet in January or February.

The annual election of officers required by our by-laws was to be done at the now deferred December meeting. We will delay the elections until we can assemble together for a meeting. In the meantime, if any one wants to make a nomination for any of the chapter officer positions let our secretary, Jim Kehn, know what you want.

We are still tasked with hosting the PRR T&HS annual meeting in May. Obviously that issue is in doubt due to the pandemic. Meanwhile we are continuing to plan for the meeting in hopes that the pandemic infections will subside to where we can host a large group. The Society Board of Directors is scheduled to have a virtual meeting December 5th. The annual meeting will be one of the topics. We will stand by until the society directors decide if they want to make any changes.

For now, let's all put safety first. Stay home as much as possible, wear masks when out in public, use sanitizer liberally and exercise social distancing.

Al Doddroe, President
Buckeye Region Chapter

Chapter Officers

Al Doddroe, President
Bob Flores, V-President
Jim Kehn, Secretary
Dick Briggs, Treasurer



Email your comments to
Alex Campbell
columbusrr@att.net

Newsletter Contributors Wanted

Members and friends of the Buckeye Chapter are invited to submit Pennsylvania Railroad related articles, stories and photos for publication in the Buckeye Chapter Newsletter. This is an opportunity to share what you have learned about the Pennsylvania Railroad Lines West in Ohio and Columbus Union Station (jointly owned by the PRR and NYC). The PRR had five lines out of Columbus all fodder for research and articles for the newsletter.

If you have an idea and some material but need help putting it together contact Jim Kehn (prrfreak@aol.com) or Alex Campbell (columbusrr@att.net). We would be glad to hear from you.

The next Buckeye Chapter Newsletter will be February, 2021.



The PRR kept a small fleet of class H-10, 2-8-0 locomotives busy at the Sandusky docks loading lake boats. Shiny No. 9895 must be fresh from the 20th Street Shops at Columbus. Photo by Donald A. Kaiser, 1955-56.

Homeless or Hobo ??

By Russ Thompson

If they are on the railroad, what do you call them ?? Being raised in a railroad family, just a block and a half from the New York Central's Columbus - Cincinnati main line, I never encountered a hobo growing up. It was after getting hired by the railroad the hobo portion of my life began.

My first personal encounter was near Leap Rd. where the track dept. had a shack / trailer. One day I had one ask me for something to eat, which I had nothing.

Working around the area of Scioto tower, it was on a regular basis I would see the folks, between the tower and the Scioto River north of the tower. South of the tower was a large encampment between the old NYC and the C&O where it was estimated there were over a hundred every night during the summer.

Another large area was west of Frankfort St. tower behind and north of the police impound lot and then north to I-70.

It was during the winter of 1976/77 I had one of my strangest meetings. Working in the Buckeye Yard interlocking area, a westbound empty grain train had stopped to recrew. I noticed some mild smoke coming from one of the cars. As I got closer, I saw that the end of the car had been covered in almost clear plastic and there was a small pipe coming out of the side of the car.

Calling, I asked if anyone was there, when a hobo popped his head out from behind the plastic. I asked him if he was alright, which he responded he was, but wanted to know where he was. I told him Columbus. Pleased with my response, he showed me what he had rigged up. Since the end of the hopper was slanted, with a beamed open area below, he had built a temporary floor out of boards and skins, walls of plastic, with a small homemade stove for warmth. He told me he was trying to get to St. Louis to meet family. I gave him credit for his work just as the train pulled out.

During the following year I saw a few folks, none of which I wanted anything to do with. Then came the 1977/78 blizzard year. Early in the season, before the big stuff came, I was working in the puller yard, fighting about 6 or 8 inches of snow. A man came up to me, but stayed a good distance apart. He must have had seven or eight coats on, heavy boots, and at least two or three pairs of pants. He excused himself, and asked if any trains were going south, as he was sick and needed to go someplace warm. Feeling sorry for him, I told him that almost everything was going east or west at this time, but there was a train about a mile north of here that was going to Indianapolis, where many trains headed south. Once again, he excused his appearance, but thanked me for the information, and started walking north.

It was at that time I realized that he would never make it. After he had made about 10 or 12 steps, I told him to stop. He questioned me why, and I told him just to stand there. I went into the signal hut, and returned in less than a minute. He was asking me what was going on when a yard cab pulled up. I told the driver, who I knew, that he was a rear brakeman who was lost and needed to get to the Indy train. Without a word, he told me he understood, and he was gone. Probably about five minutes later the

yardmaster called down on the speaker to ask me what was going on. I told him it was just a lost brakeman, and I never heard another word!

To finish, I will tell you about the oddest hobo I ever met. It was about 10 pm when I had got called out to Olentangy, for a track circuit down. While making some tests, a voice came out of the dark asking me what I was doing! I jumped up with a screwdriver in hand to find a man in a quality three-piece suit! Catching my breath, I asked him just what the hell he thought he was doing! I found out that the Conrail brass were holding a meeting in the Hyatt. Since the meeting was over, he had decided to take a stroll and see what the railroad looked like in this area. After giving him hell for being there, I found out he was a vice-president, and had no idea what kind of area he had walked into. After clearing up my problem, that became the only time I told a VP of the railroad to get in my truck, and I drove him back to the Hyatt. ASAP!!!



Illustration by William B. Westhoff

A Run on the Panhandle – Thanksgiving 1970

by James M. Cavanaugh

When I worked on the New York Central's Toledo & Ohio Central in the 1960s, we considered the Pennsylvania Railroad's Panhandle line from Columbus to Pittsburgh to be the ultimate in big-time railroading. The Panhandle had every feature of heavy haulage and high-speed operations, plus passenger and scheduled express mail trains that the T&OC lacked. This was 229 miles of double-track (and more) right-of-way from High Street Tower in downtown Columbus to Pitcairn Yard southeast of Pittsburgh, running through Yards A and B past the St. Clair Engine House and Alum Creek Tower over the B&O's four-track main to Newark, through the hills of Eastern Ohio past abandoned 19th Century tunnels bypassed by enormous wartime rock cuts, north up the Ohio River at Mingo Junction, across the River at Steubenville, through the West Virginia panhandle (thence the name) crossing gigantic high bridges on the Ohio and Monongahela. The alternate PRR destination from Columbus was Conway, 191 miles from High Street, up the Ohio River through "Steel Valley" over the PRR's River and Bayard Branches, crossing into Pennsylvania along the north shore, onto the PRR Pittsburgh to Chicago Main Line at Rochester, Pennsylvania, and down into the seemingly endless Conway Yard in the Pittsburgh industrial region. In the rail world, the Panhandle was as big as they come.

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<http://www.columbusrailroads.com/new/pdf/Panhandle3b.pdf>



Three 2500 hp U25B locomotives were used for the 1970 Thanksgiving trip from Columbus to Conway Yard.

PRR RESOURCES – The Columbus Railroad’s Library

Columbus Railroads has compiled a small collection of trade journal articles; links to railroad reference publications, such as the Official Guide of the Railways; and other books of possible interest to the Pennsylvania Railroad fan.

The Steam Railroad Library Index –

[http://www.columbusrailroads.com/new/?menu=05Steam Railroads&submenu=75The Steamroad Library](http://www.columbusrailroads.com/new/?menu=05Steam%20Railroads&submenu=75The%20Steamroad%20Library)

There is also a library index page for interurban and streetcar articles.

The Interurban Library Index –

[http://www.columbusrailroads.com/new/?menu=04Interurbans&submenu=55The Interurban Library](http://www.columbusrailroads.com/new/?menu=04Interurbans&submenu=55The%20Interurban%20Library)

The Streetcar Library Index –

[http://www.columbusrailroads.com/new/?menu=03Streetcars&submenu=75The Streetcar Library](http://www.columbusrailroads.com/new/?menu=03Streetcars&submenu=75The%20Streetcar%20Library)



A second look at a PRR class H-10, 2-8-0 locomotive at Sandusky. A close up of No. 9943 for the modelers. Photo by Donald A. Kaiser, 1955-56.

News from the Past:

Judge's Ruling Allows Amtrak To Cut Service

'National Limited' Takes Last Journey Through Columbus

By Melissa Widner

Columbus Dispatch (October 1, 1979) – Like a proud old songstress on her last curtain call, the *National Limited* slipped through the dewy fog Monday on its last run from Columbus westward.

It was the end of the line for the passenger train service plagued by financial problems and terminated by Amtrak.

THE TRAIN HAS connected New York to Kansas City with stops in Columbus and Dayton, among other midwestern cities for many years.

U.S. Supreme Court Justice Warren Burger late Sunday permitted Amtrak to terminate the long-distance train.

A few railroad buffs stood on the Columbus platform. Some waved and others bowed their heads in tearful tribute as the train left Columbus for the last time at 7:25 a.m.

For those who intentionally took the trip, it was a sad occasion. Many said they had ancestors who were railroad people. Their lives were filled with railroad remembrances and their homes a haven for such memorabilia as railroad lanterns and old ticket stubs.

MIKE LEYSHON of 320 Northridge Rd. was the last passenger to board at the Columbus stop as trainman Sylvester Stanley looked nostalgically toward the engine and sounded "all aboard" sadly for the last time.

During the hour and 35-minute trip down the rocky rails to Dayton, Leyshon explained his love for the railroad.

"I used to ride the rail as a kid to visit relatives all over the country," he said as he breakfasted on French toast in the dining car. "I've had my tickets for a week for this occasion. Usually when I'm on the train I'll eat just a sweet roll and coffee, but this time I'm going to eat a special breakfast."

WHILE THE LIMITED rolled toward Dayton another passenger, Margaret Wettroth, 87, of St. Louis, took her last sip of coffee on the train she has taken routinely for the last 10 years. Shunning airplanes and buses Mrs.

Wetroth had ridden the same train once a year to visit her granddaughter in New York City. "Now I don't know what I'm going to do," she said as she placed the paper cup in her shopping bag to save as a souvenir.

The train has always been convenient for me. It's easy for me to get to the station since I'm not very well and the station in New York is close to where my granddaughter lives. I guess I won't be able to see my granddaughter anymore. This is a sad occasion," Mrs. Wettroth said tearfully.



These are the people – the Mrs. Wettroths – that I’m concerned about,” trainman Stanley said as he walked through the clean streamlined cars, checking on passengers.

“**I JUST DON’T** understand. This train is paying off. We’re hauling people upon people. This train runs through four states and four capitols. It will be a terrible disservice to the people like Mrs. Wettroth who have been our steady customers.”

Stanley was sentimental. He has worked on the railroad for 39 years. He started as clerk.

Stanley, 59, of 1075 Bernard Rd., was lured to the railroad life from the train whistles he would hear near his home in Lexington Ky.

“**I WAS BORN** about 300 yards from the main line of the old Southern Railroad. When I was a little kid, I would watch the trains go by and I’ve always had a fascination for them.”

“This is the fourth and final passenger I’ve been on. It’s sad for me.”

As the train passed through dense patches of fog, Stanley reminisced about two of his favorite passengers. “We’ve had many celebrities ride with us. But I remember Harry and Bess Truman best of all. Every member of the crew knew them and they in turn were sociable and interested in us,” he said of the former first family that regularly rode from Washington, D.C. to their home in Independence, Mo.

“**EVERY MORNING** at 6:30 their bedroom compartment door would open and they would sit and talk to people who passed by. The president always took a walk around the train at 6 a.m. and after that he was ready to relax with his wife. He always took the *Spirit of St. Louis*, the *Limited’s* former name.

“I know if old Harry were around, he wouldn’t let this happen.”



The Amtrak Station in Columbus. The Fourth Street bridge is in the background as is US Tower to the right. Photo by Galen Gonser.
