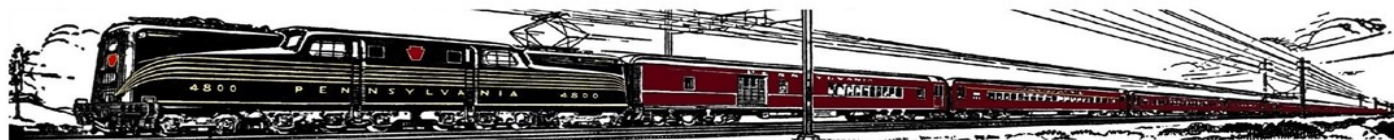


# LANCASTER DISPATCHER

1935-2025



LANCASTER CHAPTER, INC., NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

VOLUME 58 NUMBER 12

DISTRICT 2—CHAPTER WEBSITE: [WWW.NRHS1.ORG](http://WWW.NRHS1.ORG)

DECEMBER 2025



*Merry Christmas  
and a Happy New Year*



**PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD**





## Railway News Flash

By Steve Ferrell

Gathered from press releases and revised for this publication

**December, 2025**

- SEPTA was given an extension by the Federal Railroad Administration until November 14<sup>th</sup> to finish the enhanced inspections of every Silverliner IV railcar. Teams have already inspected 120 of the fleet's 223 EMU cars. The FRA also extended the deadline for SEPTA to install thermal protection circuits on the railcars to protect them from overheating. Fires on these EMU units have been a big issue for these cars.
- The explosion of a propane tank on Delmarva Central Railroad's maintenance-of-way equipment caused several structures to be damaged. At least five homes and a church were damaged by this event.
- The cutover of traffic to the new Portal North Bridge on the Northeast Corridor during early 2026 could disrupt New Jersey Transit and Amtrak traffic. The project is almost finished, but this operation could cause up to six weeks of delays and cancellations.
- Amtrak issued a Request for Information to solicit public interest in procuring 370 Amfleet cars, with the real intent to sell them for scrap. Eighty-three Airo trainsets are set to replace the Amfleet cars on the Northeast Corridor and regional lines.
- On November 7<sup>th</sup>, Amtrak in partnership with PennDOT announced the completion of the North Platform at Lancaster Station. This was ahead of schedule and now the station features two fully accessible high-level platforms.
- Amtrak set a ridership record of 34.5 million trips this year, a record!
- Union Pacific unveiled plans to operate the Big Boy 4-8-8-4 Steam locomotive on a transcontinental trip in 2026. This will be part of the nation's 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations.
- Eurostar has ordered 30 double-decker trainsets (called Celestia) from Alstom for Channel Tunnel services. The trainsets are based on Alstom's Avelia Horizon bi-level trains first built for France's SNCF Voyageurs.
- The Wilmington and Western Railroad began operations this fall amid lots of controversy. After shutting down operations in February 2025, much of the past year has been spent doing track and locomotive maintenance. In April 2025, three employees were laid off. Most of the previous volunteers were and the volunteer leaders were dismissed by the current board of directors. These volunteers have voiced concerns that the railroad is being managed poorly by the current board.
- Reading and Northern Railroad repainted one of its locomotives to celebrate the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our independence! The locomotive is their SD40-2 Number 3061, now renumbered as number 1776. Employee Evan Kerr designed the paint scheme with a red and white striped hood, blue cab and thirteen stars on the nose.
- New Jersey Transit will continue rail fleet modernization with an overhaul of its fleet of 429 multilevel I and II railcars. These units are approaching twenty years of service and are due for their recommended mid-life overhaul. New Jersey Transit is in the process of procuring new third-generation Multilevel vehicles and this overhaul will ensure that the older units will have compatibility with these new units.
- On November 8<sup>th</sup>, the Alaska Railroad #557, Baldwin 2-8-0 was fired up for the first time in sixty years. After 13 years of work, the volunteer crew restoring the locomotive grasped that much of the work is done as the project is now 95% complete. Work on this oil-burning steam locomotive has already consumed over 500,000 hours of volunteer efforts.

**THIS MONTH ON THE PENNSY****PRR, PRSL & LIRR EVENTS IN DECEMBER**

Source: Pennsylvania Railroad Technical & Historical Society (permission of Christopher Baer, PRRT&HS).

December 31, 1921 In New Year's message, Pres. Rea states PRR has reduced operating expenses by \$170 million in 1921, but its rate of return is still less than savings bank interest.

December 13, 1936 Escalators cut into the center of the Grand Staircase of Penn Station; placed in service because of the increase in passengers carrying their own bags.

December 30, 1936 City of South Amboy sues the PRR, CNJ and NY&LB demanding that they stop more trains at South Amboy as per contract; the PRR would like to stop more trains only to move more of the engine changes there; the CNJ is opposed on the grounds that having the PRR trains sit in the station for the engine change interferes with its own trains, that the City hopes to have more trains stop than the traffic demands, and that the engine change and more stops will give the PRR an edge with South Amboy passengers.

December 12, 1941 PRR and its southern connections begin a massive movement to bring the approximately 100,000 soldiers now training at southern bases home to the Northeast for the holidays; first third leaves Dec. 12-13 and returns Dec. 26-30; second third leaves Dec. 14-16 and returns Dec. 26-30; third group leaves Dec. 27-29 and returns Jan. 10-11 of 1942.

December 4, 1946 PRR orders first two F3 freight road diesels from EMD; A-B-B-B-A units with 7,500 HP per set.

December 18, 1946 PRR Board authorizes \$16.375 million purchase of 19 6,000 HP passenger diesels (5 EMD E7 A-B-A sets, 5 Alco PA A-B-A sets and 9 BLW Centipede A-A sets) to complete dieselization of Blue Ribbon trains and 6 EMD F3 7,500 HP freight diesels to experimentally dieselize one freight train each between Harrisburg and Chicago/St. Louis, plus a B unit for E7 No. 59005901; also 5 diesel switchers; ends PRR commitment to steam.

December 19, 1956 PRR Board authorizes purchase of 6 experimental "Pioneer III" MU cars for \$1.6 million.

December 2, 1961 President John F. Kennedy rides PRR special in business car No. 120 Pennsylvania returning from Army-Navy Game to Washington.

December 5, 1966 Penn Central merger hearings begin before ICC examiner; the Erie Lackawanna asks that the ICC bar the PRR and NYC from making changes in operating patterns that might harm the EL before the merger, and not just after.

December 12, 1966 PRR Chief Maintenance of Way Officer John F. Piper tells the New England Railroad Club that the PRR will begin 110 MPH passenger service in Oct. 1967.

December 21, 1966 PRR Board authorizes purchase of 35 EMD, 15 GE and 10 Alco diesels.

December 27, 1971 Construction begins on new Trenton, N.J. station.

December 12, 1976 GG1 No. 4855, double heading on mail train No. 10, develops a hotbox near Parkesburg; is delivered to Strasburg Railroad on Dec. 14 for repairs; towed from Leaman Place by 2-6-0 No. 89.

December 26, 1976 GG1 No. 913 and all five cars of No. 441, Harrisburg-Washington section of Broadway Limited derail at Downingtown at 7:30 PM; 36 injured.

## The New York High Line

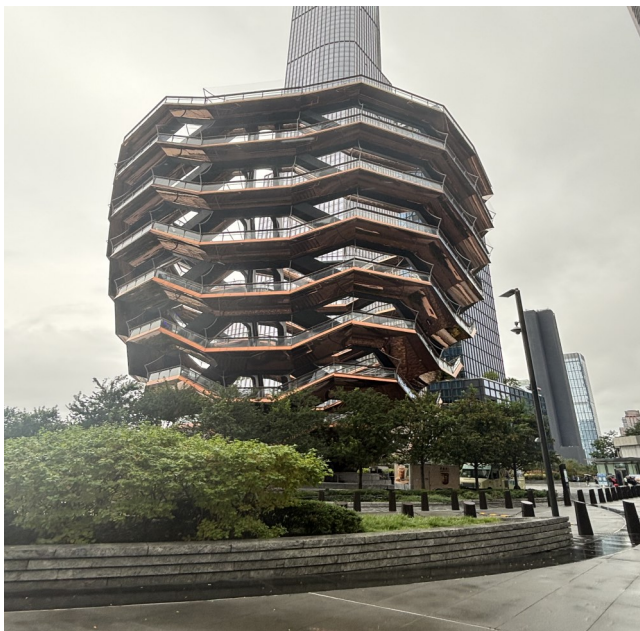
By Jim Donohue

As a freight rail line, the High Line was in operation from 1934 to 1980. It carried meat to the Meatpacking District, agricultural goods to the factories and warehouses of the industrial West Side, and mail to the U.S. Post Office. It came about as New York City grew exponentially, especially on the lower West Side. Street traffic became so immense, that the New York Central Railroad could not continue to function amidst the dense pedestrian and vehicular stream of traffic. Thus, the decision was made to build an overhead rail line, similar to New York City's elevated subway lines. The route included double tracking (for switching purposes) and bridges into customers' buildings at the 2nd floor level. In 1980, the commerce served by the Central had declined and was replaced by residential apartments and condos. Trucking took over any intra-city freight shipments. The High Line was closed, as it was no longer needed and the remains began to languish.

The city began to consider use of the High Line structure as a park, starting in 1983. After many long planning sessions, the ground breaking took place in 2006. Today, the High Line is one, continuous, 1.45-mile-long greenway featuring 500+ species of plants and trees. The park is maintained, operated, and programmed by Friends of the High Line in partnership with the NYC Department of Parks & Recreation. On top of public space and gardens, the High Line is home to a diverse suite of public programs, community and teen engagement, and world-class artwork and performances, free and open to all.

The High Line was donated to the City by CSX Transportation, Inc. The land beneath the High Line is owned in parcels by New York State, New York City, and more than 20 private property owners.

On October 8th, 2025, ten members of the Ride With Me Steve contingent (but without Steve, vacationing on a cruise) walked the High Line. We had the advantage of going on a weekday in the early fall and it was drizzling in the morning as we started. We were advise that this kept crowds away, enabling us to comfortably walk and take photos, largely unencumbered. Here is a pictorial essay of the High Line.



The walk began at "The Vessel," created by Thomas Heatherwick and Heatherwick Studio. The Vessel overlooks the Hudson Yards, as do the surrounding streets. The Yards house the Long Island Railroad (Metropolitan Transportation Authority) commuter trains outside of Penn Station.

All photos by the author and John Smith.

## The New York High Line (continued)



### INTERIM WALKWAY TEMPORARILY CLOSED

To access the High Line during operating hours, go to the nearest entrance at 30th Street and 10th Avenue (star) or various entrances around 30th Street and 10th Avenue (stars, elevator on the southwest side of the street). Public restrooms are located on the Spur at 30th Street, at 16th Street, and at Gansevoort Street.

### FREIGHT RAIL ON MANHATTAN'S WEST SIDE



The 19th century brought a population boom and rapid growth in manufacturing to New York City. To serve the growing metropolis, freight rail lines were constructed along the city streets and waterfront. The High Line was built by New York Central Railroad between 1909 and 1934 to eliminate street-level train crossings from 14th Street to Spring Street in an effort to improve both efficiency and public safety.

For years the High Line served as an integral part of Manhattan's industrial landscape—the "Life Line of New York." The elevated railway allowed for efficient delivery of meat, produce, and dairy products into the warehouses and factories up and down the West Side.

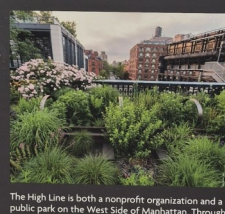
Following years of collaboration with the City of New York and Friends of the High Line, in 2010 CSX donated the High Line to the City of New York, passing the key for the High Line to be opened to the public.

The West Side of Manhattan has been transformed from an industrial district into residential and commercial neighborhoods with new parks and cultural activities. The High Line is a physical reminder of the important role of the railroad in New York City's industrial past.

### HIGH LINE 1840-TODAY



### SUPPORT THE HIGH LINE



The High Line is both a nonprofit organization and a public park on the West Side of Manhattan. Through our work with communities on and off the High Line, we're devoted to reimagining public spaces to create connected, healthy neighborhoods and cities.

Built on a historic, elevated rail line, the High Line was always intended to be more than a park. You can walk through the gardens, view art, experience a performance, enjoy food or beverage, or connect with friends and neighbors—all while enjoying a unique perspective of New York City.

Nearly 100% of our annual budget comes through donations. The High Line is owned by the City of New York and we operate under a license agreement with NYC Parks.

Left, at the entrance on 33rd street and 10th Avenue, a sign tells of the history of the High Line, including a photo of the "cowboy" leading a New York Central train on the street prior to the High Line's construction. Indeed, deaths and accidents caused by trains led to the erection of the elevated rails. 10th Avenue became known as "Death Avenue." By 1910, more than 540 people had been killed by trains!



Among many interesting buildings we passed, here is the "Lego" building.



Left: the entrance to the High Line, keeping traffic out, but displaying the railroad tracks as they rose up the grade.

Right: after a gentle left turn, downtown we go. The High Line does make many turns as it meanders through the city.

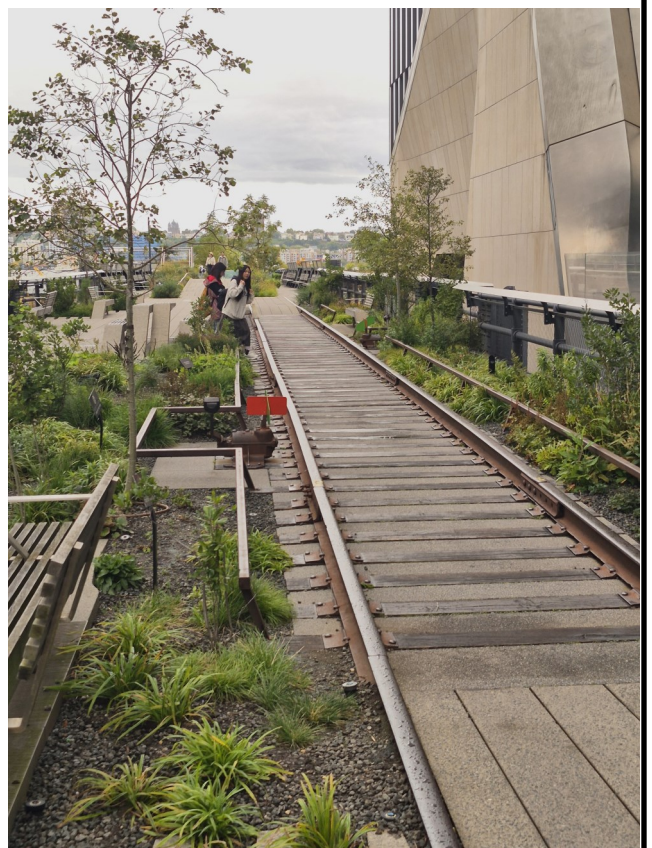


**The New York High Line (continued)**

The High Line begins with great views of the wide open Hudson Yards.



Next up, “faux tracks” among the real thing.

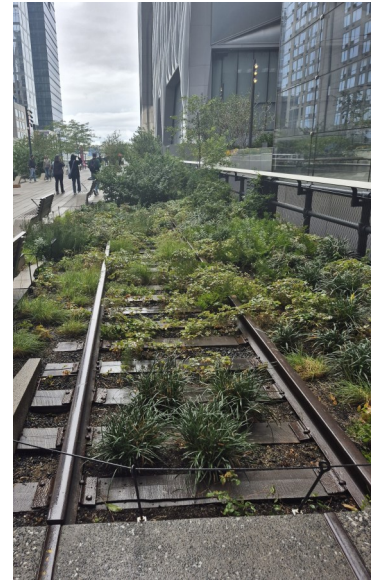
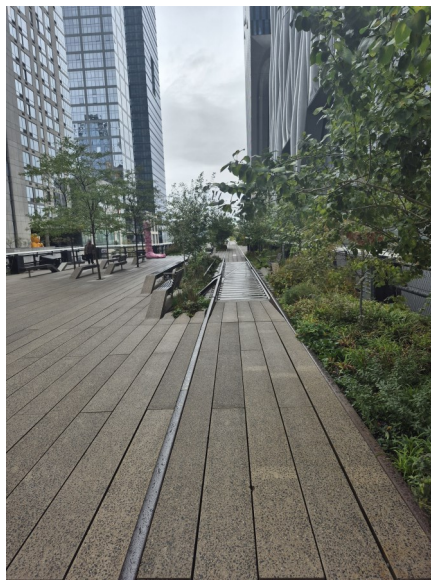
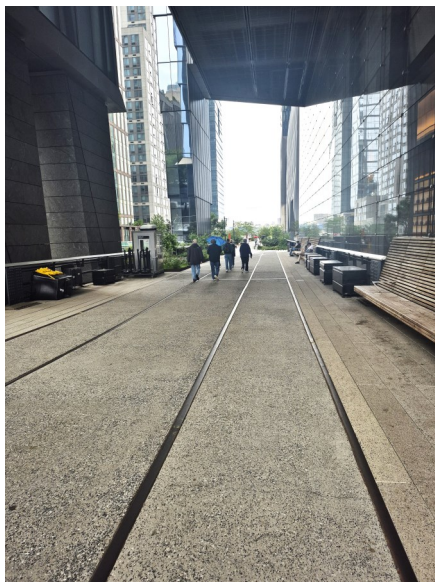


### The New York High Line (continued)

The were and are many switch tracks for the industries once served. Here are two and yes, switch machines!



The line passes under buildings that never were during its useful lifetime as well as lush gardens.



### The New York High Line (continued)

Multiple bridges connected the High Line to the industries served.



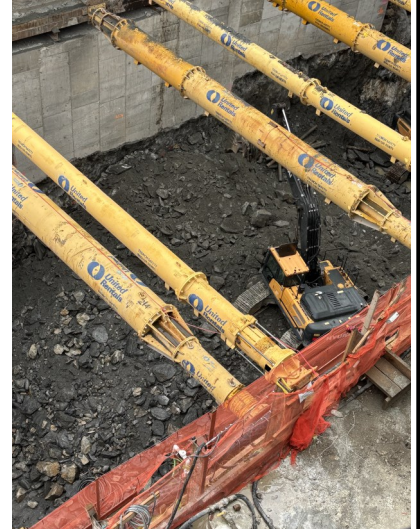
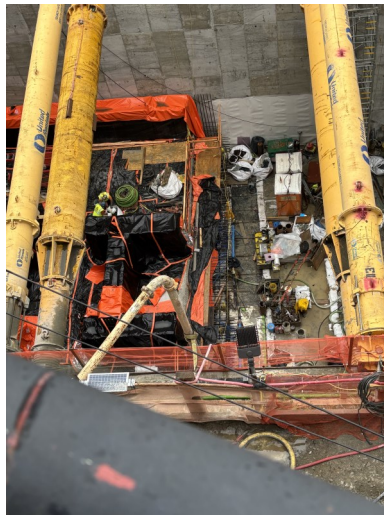
Below, left: Lush gardens planted among the tracks treat New Yorkers to a serene view amid the bedlam of the city.

Right: tourists cross 20th Street on a beautifully laminated wood (over steel) truss bridge.



### The New York High Line (continued)

Interesting sights and architectural buildings along the High Line.... Starting with views of the construction of the Hudson Tunnel Project of Amtrak's Gateway Program. Due for completion in 2035.



### OTHER SIGHTS ALONG THE HIGH LINE:



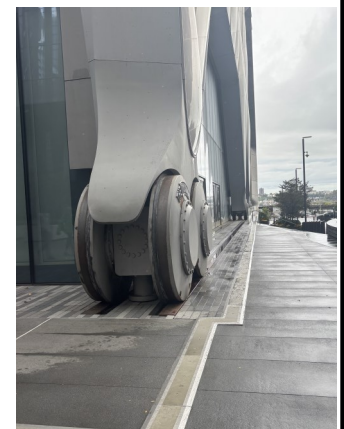
"Dinosaur," a 16-foot-tall pigeon at 10th Avenue and 30th Street by artist Ivan Argote.



Walk-out observation deck on a skyscraper.



A cow on a resident's balcony. 10 stories up.



"The Shed" has a mobile shell to move via these wheels to increase size of space when needed for audiences.



"Dented" office building.



Fishbowl apartments.

Right: No visit to New York is complete without a view of the iconic Empire State Building.



**Lancaster Chapter 2026 Dues - Renew Now**

**Mail to:** MR. TOM STECKLER  
10 PARKER DRIVE  
CHRISTIANA, PA 17509-9705

**Make check payable to: LANCASTER CHAPTER NRHS**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Family Member: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address for Newsletter: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

2024 Chapter dues \$20.00 – plus \$2.00 if you have a family member \_\_\_\_\_

Student Dues – ages 13 to 24 \$ 10.00 or Youth ages 05 – 12 \$5.00 \_\_\_\_\_

PAPER COPY OF NEWSLETTER - \$12.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Donation to Lancaster Chapter \_\_\_\_\_

**Total amount of check payable to Lancaster Chapter NRHS** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**LAST DATE FOR RENEWING 2026 MEMBERSHIP IS APRIL 30, 2026!!**

**DO NOT ADD YOUR NATIONAL DUES TO YOUR LANCASTER CHAPTER CHECK!  
INCLUDE YOUR NATIONAL DUES NOTIFICATION LETTER FROM NATIONAL WITH  
YOUR CHECK**

If you would like us to forward your National Dues, **please make a 2<sup>nd</sup> check payable to NRHS**

National Dues \$50.00 – plus \$7.00 if you have a family member \_\_\_\_\_

Student Dues – ages 13 to 24 \$ 16.00 or Youth ages 05 – 12 \$5.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Donation to National \_\_\_\_\_

**Total amount of check payable to NRHS** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Questions: Contact Helen Shaak 717-484-4020 – email [hshaak@dejazzd.com](mailto:hshaak@dejazzd.com)

"INSIDE THE BACK PAGE"  
UPCOMING LANCASTER CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

DECEMBER 14, 2025 - SUNDAY, 5:30 PM ANNUAL CHAPTER CHRISTMAS PARTY - PLEASE BRING A POT LUCK DISH  
 CHRISTIANA OPEN HOUSE: 1:00 - 4:00 PM AT CHRISTIANA FREIGHT HOUSE  
 ALL ARE WELCOME! 10 RAILROAD AVENUE, CHRISTIANA, PA 17509

NO MEETING IN JANUARY OR FEBRUARY. NEXT CHAPTER MEETING: SUNDAY, MARCH 15, 2026

ANNUAL BANQUET— HERSHEY FARMS RESTAURANT, STRASBURG, PA —- NOVEMBER 21ST, 2025



25+ Year Members: Steve Himppl (47 yrs), Thomas McMaster (52 yrs), Donetta Eberly and Doris Depew (32 years), Smoke & Helen Shaak (35 yrs), Tony White NRHS President, Glenn & Cindy Kendig (43 yrs) and David Stambaugh (45 years).



Edwin & Nancy Petit de Mange receiving their 25 Year Member Pins from Smoke Shaak Chapter National Representative and Tony White, NRHS President.



Celebrating the Lancaster Chapter's 90th Birthday with our cake on Sunday, October 19th, 2025. As we are the first chapter of the NRHS, the occasion was even more special!



Banquet guest speaker Richard Stewart, owner of the famous Pullman car "Francis L. Suter."

**Care packages for seniors in need:** The chapter is asking for donations of items to put together care packages for those in need. If you can help, please donate any of the following items and bring them to the Christmas party on Sunday, December 14th. Liquid soap, shower gel, no-rinse shampoo, baby wipes, lotion, foot cream, hand cream, hand sanitizer, ChapStick, combs, hair brushes, candy, snack items (no peanuts), small hand-held games, magazines, tablet/pen and playing cards.

## LANCASTER CHAPTER BOARD OF DIRECTORS

|                     |                  |              |                       |
|---------------------|------------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| PRESIDENT:          | TOM SHENK        | 717-560-1186 | TSHENK@NRHS1.ORG      |
| 1ST VICE PRESIDENT: | GLENN KENDIG     | 717-917-0644 | CINDYKENDIG@GMAIL.COM |
| 2ND VICE PRESIDENT: | DAVID STAMBAUGH  | 717-683-3053 | DAVIDES53@ATT.NET     |
| SECRETARY:          | TOM FLUCK        | 610-873-1784 | BEDBUGROW@MAC.COM     |
| TREASURER:          | RICHARD RUTLEDGE | 717-741-0205 | RRJ611@COMCAST.NET    |
| EDITOR:             | JIM DONOHUE      | 717-445-0394 | JTD1117@GMAIL.COM     |
| HISTORIAN:          | LINDA HIMPSL     | 717-285-4283 | SHIMPSL@AOL.COM       |
| 1ST DIR AT LARGE:   | CINDY KENDIG     | 717-917-5137 | CINDYKENDIG@GMAIL.COM |
| 2ND DIR AT LARGE:   | STEPHEN HIMPSL   | 717-285-4283 | SHIMPSL@AOL.COM       |
| NATL REP & WEB:     | HAROLD SHAAK     | 717-484-4020 | HSHAAK@DEJAZZD.COM    |
| CHAPLIN:            | LORRIE STEFFY    | 717-419-7515 | LDSTEFFY4@YAHOO.COM   |
| DONATIONS:          | STEPHEN HIMPSL   | 717-285-4283 | SHIMPSL@AOL.COM       |
| RENTALS:            | CINDY KENDIG     | 717-917-5137 | CINDYKENDIG@GMAIL.COM |
| WEB SITE            | THOMAS STECKLER  | 610-593-2594 | THOMAZ@COMCAST.NET    |

## LANCASTER DISPATCHER CO-EDITORS

|              |               |              |                  |
|--------------|---------------|--------------|------------------|
| CO-EDITOR:   | STEVE FERRELL | 610-812-1020 | STFARREL@AOL.COM |
| COPY EDITOR: | JANE FERRELL  |              |                  |

NEXT CHAPTER MEETING

**LANCASTER CHAPTER, INC., N.R.H.S.**  
**DECEMBER 14, 2025– SUNDAY, 5:30 PM**  
**ANNUAL CHAPTER CHRISTMAS PARTY**  
**CHRISTIANA FREIGHT HOUSE**  
**10 RAILROAD AVENUE**

## LANCASTER CHAPTER, INC.

NATIONAL RAILWAY

HISTORICAL SOCIETY

10 RAILROAD AVENUE

CHRISTIANA, PA 17509-1416

PHONE: 717-917-5137

CHAPTER WEBSITE: WWW.NRHS1.ORG



THE LANCASTER DISPATCHER IS PUBLISHED MONTHLY AS THE NEWSLETTER OF THE LANCASTER CHAPTER, NRHS, AND IS E-MAILED TO EACH MEMBER OF THE CHAPTER AS ONE OF THE BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP. ANNUAL LANCASTER CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP DUES ARE \$ 20; FAMILY MEMBERSHIP : \$2; STUDENT: \$10; YOUTH: \$5. IF YOU DESIRE A MAILED NEWSLETTER: \$12. NATIONAL NRHS DUES ARE MAILED SEPARATELY. OPINIONS AND POINTS OF VIEW EXPRESSED HEREIN ARE THOSE OF THE EDITORS, STAFF OR CONTRIBUTORS AND ARE NOT NECESSARILY THOSE OF THE MEMBERSHIP, OFFICERS, OR THE NRHS. THE DEADLINE FOR ALL ITEMS SUBMITTED IS THE THIRD MONDAY OF THE PRECEDING MONTH. ADDRESS CHANGES OR CORRECTIONS SHOULD BE SENT TO: HAROLD SHAAK, P.O. BOX 813, ADAMSTOWN, PA 19501-0813 OR EMAIL: HSHAAK@DEJAZZD.COM.

PLEASE DELIVER PROMPTLY

FIRST CLASS MAIL

*Forwarding and Address Correction Requested*

CHRISTIANA, PA 17509-1416

10 RAILROAD AVENUE

LANCASTER CHAPTER, INC., N.R.H.S.