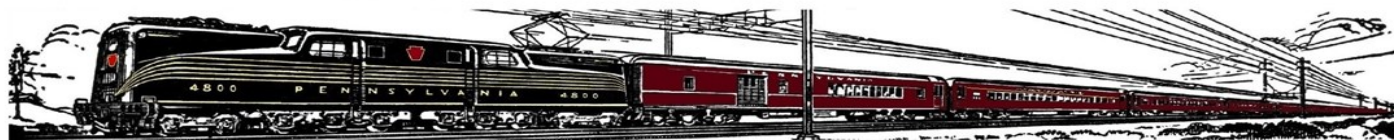


LANCASTER DISPATCHER

1935-2026



LANCASTER CHAPTER, INC., NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

VOLUME 59 NUMBER 1-2 DISTRICT 2—CHAPTER WEBSITE: WWW.NRHS1.ORG JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2026





Railway News Flash

By Steve Ferrell

Gathered from press releases and revised for this publication

January - February, 2026

- SEPTA missed the latest FRA deadline for repairs on its aging fleet of Silverliner IV cars. The problem is the shortage of thermal wires that are additional fire detection measures. They have bought all the available thermal wire available in North America. They expect to receive more wire before the end of January.
- On December 5th 10 leased rail coach cars from the Maryland Area Regional Commuter Rail (MARC) arrived at SEPTA. These cars will alleviate the shortage of rolling stock because of the repairs to the Silverliner IV cars. SEPTA is talking with other commuter railroads to attempt to acquire even more rolling stock.
- The new Airo trainset that is now being tested in the Philadelphia area was recently spotted being tested on the Keystone line at Paradise, PA. The Airo trainset will also be tested on the Northeast Corridor. These new articulated trainsets will replace the aging Amfleet I and II cars, now nearing fifty years old! The Airo's will be used locally on the Keystone and Northeast Corridor lines.
- On December 1st, Amtrak resumed service on the Lake Shore limited between Boston and Albany. This was after months of bus service between the two cities. A landslide near Albany had forced the closure of the Post Road Branch.
- In New York City, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority opened a new facility to test and inspect subway equipment. This is for checking the new subway cars now being delivered before being placed in service. The site of the facility is in Sunset Park.
- Governor Kathy Hochel and other officials announced that the Metro-North commuter line would begin making one round trip a day to Albany, allowing a more affordable commute than on Amtrak. Previously all Metro-North trains on the Hudson Line terminated at Poughkeepsie.
- The Tri-States Railway Preservation Society has been told by the Port Jervis city leadership that they must vacate the former Erie Railroad turntable site in Port Jervis. The museum with its rolling stock and artifacts outside will close and withdraw from the community. They must be off the property by July 26th, 2026. The society is looking for a new home for its museum and equipment. The city, in need of money, will sell the property after an environmental cleanup.
- Reading and Northern offered \$10 million dollars to buy the rail assets of the Luzern County Redevelopment Authority. These lines are currently operated by R.J. Corman. It is also planning on building a passenger train station in downtown Wilkes-Barre, Pa. These lines would be used for excursion trains to Jim Thorpe and other spots along the R&N routes.
- A Norfolk Southern freight train derailed at a railroad crossing in Manheim Borough on December 3rd. This caused traffic on route 72 to be blocked. No spills were found and no injuries had been reported. All cars remained upright. Traffic was redirected for over four hours as the Norfolk Southern crews worked to re-rail and move the train.
- Virginia Railway Express and Amtrak have altered their schedules to accommodate morning work blocks that will continue for five years between Washington DC and Alexandria, Virginia. This will allow the construction of a second two track Long Bridge across the Potomac River.

THIS MONTH ON THE PENNSY**PRR, PRSL & LIRR EVENTS IN JANUARY—FEBRUARY**

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

Jan. 2, 1922 Solid train of 100 PRR steel box cars with 500 Durant automobiles leaves Greenville Yard in Jersey City for California via Overland Route; largest transcontinental shipment of a single commodity; train runs intact as far as Ogden, Utah, as publicity stunt.

Jan. 6, 1922 PRR announces it will retire its last wooden dining cars in next few months; 20 new steel diners on order.

Jan. 1, 1927 Central New England Railway and Harlem River & Port Chester Railroad merged into New Haven.

Jan. 9, 1932 Lehigh-Pennsylvania Express, through PRR/LV train between Phillipsburg, N.J., and Sunbury, Pa., via Mount Carmel with through cars for Pittsburgh, makes last run; effective Jan. 10th; replaced by LV gas-electric run between Phillipsburg and Mount Carmel and PRR local between Mount Carmel and Sunbury.

Jan. 23, 1932 AC electrification placed in service between Sunnyside Yard and Manhattan Transfer.

Jan. 13, 1937 PRR Board authorizes \$36.3 million for electrification of lines between Paoli and Harrisburg, Trenton and Enola Yard via Low Grade Line, "Port Road" between Royalton and Perryville, Monmouth Jct. and South Amboy, CV between Harrisburg and Lemoyne, Frazer to West Chester, Greenwich Yard line, Trenton/Coalport Yard, and Meadows Yard, permitting electrification of all main passenger and freight routes east of Harrisburg; financed by regular bond issue through banks; Board also approves \$13.4 million for modifying and new electric locomotives and \$95 million increase in funded debt; approves expanding mail facilities at Penn Station.

Feb. 17, 1937 Work on Harrisburg electrification begins in Chester County; Paoli-Thorndale and Trenton Cutoff contracted to Vare Brothers Construction Company; Thorndale-Harrisburg/Enola to McCloskey & Co.; Monmouth Jct.-South Amboy to James McGraw & Co.; Philadelphia area to Loucheim, Brown & McDonough; Port Road to Arundel Corporation.

Feb. 18, 1947 PRR announces first operating loss ever for 1946.

Feb. 28, 1947 Sleeping car Cascade Mirage detaches from the rear of the westbound Sunshine Special No. 3 at 4:08 AM as it is climbing the east slope between Altoona and Gallitzin; the car rolls 3.4 miles downhill before derailling at the east end of Barndimarte Curve.

Jan. 1952 GG1's Nos. 4908-4913 are repainted from Brunswick Green to Tuscan Red with gold leaf stripes and Clarendon lettering to match the new Budd stainless steel cars for the Congressional and Senator; Nos. 4856, 4857, 4876 and 4929 are repainted later, and gold leaf striping and lettering is changed to buff paint later in the year.

PRR announces it will buy six experimental Budd MU cars based on Pioneer III design for Philadelphia commuter service with an option on 44 more; will seat 132; will have ignitron rectifiers and d.c. traction motors; to be followed by regular order for 250 cars to replace MP54's system-wide; order is placed Jan. 11.

Feb. 7, 1957 Huntingdon & Broad Top Mountain Railroad & Coal Company liquidated.

Jan. 1, 1962 The average PRR coach is almost 37 years old vs. a national average of 29.46 years; old P70s are still a mainstay of service between New York and Washington.

Jan. 1962 Delaware River Port Authority votes to build a rapid transit line between Philadelphia and Kirkwood, N.J., incorporating the existing Bridge Line to Camden.

Feb. 25, 1962 Last run of passenger trains Nos. 638-645 between Harrisburg and Hagerstown; ends passenger service on Cumberland Valley west of Lemoyne.

Feb. 1967 Number of PRR employees now at 57,717, an all-time low.

Feb. 1972 Penn Central is still losing money at the rate of \$786,444 per day.

Jan. 18, 1977 Amtrak Pres. Paul H. Reistrup approves Howard Serig's plan to repaint a GG1 in the original Raymond Loewy livery. (editor's note: GG-1 # 4935 will be chosen).

**Visiting Harrisburg's "Harris" Tower and Power Director's Office
By Steve Ferrell**

For years, riders have asked me to plan a trip westbound on the Keystone and to visit the Harris Tower in Harrisburg. Recently, the NRHS Harrisburg Chapter has added the Power Director's Office to their offerings for visitation, adding a key site in the history of railroad electrification.

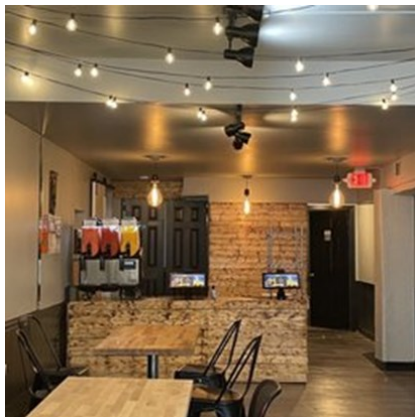
Contacting the Harrisburg Chapter, I soon heard back from Mark Eyer, their chapter president that they would be willing to open both the Tower and the Power Director's Office on a Wednesday for our Ride with me Steve rail riding group. Soon I would have over a dozen riders signed up for this trip.



**Power Director's Office,
left picture by Dan Mur-
ray, Right Picture by Ste-
ve Ferrell**

Arriving at Harrisburg's classic vintage transportation center, our group was met by three members of the Harrisburg Chapter. They took us upstairs to the Power Director's Office and we met three more chapter members. Then we had an amazingly detailed tour. With questions and answers, this tour lasted over an hour! This center controlled all the signal and catenary electricity for the Main Line, the Port Road line and the lines into Enola Yard! It was set up as if it was still running (the power and the Harris Tower are now controlled by Amtrak's Unified Operations Center in Wilmington, Delaware)! Finally, they ran a realistic demonstration of a power test with the noisy relays whizzing, clicking, clacking and burping behind the directors desk within the relay racks. With all the dials and switches of the 1930's style, it looked like Dr. Frankenstein's laboratory!

Now it was time for lunch at the nearby "Hookers Seafood Joint". I had re-searched this place online and found it to be highly rated. It is basically a takeout place with limited seating. Several of our hosts offered to show us the way, and within about ten minutes we arrived at their door.



**Interior and Exterior of Hookers, photo on
left from website, on right by John Smith**



Visiting Harrisburg's "Harris" Tower and Power Director's Office (continued)

Entering the small restaurant, we encountered no humans at the counter to take our order. Instead, we found two computer stations to enter our orders online. No cash was accepted and we all placed our orders. While waiting we heard two voices in the kitchen to the left behind the counter as our food was being fried (the only option here). The eatery also offers many versions of grits and great french fries in exceptionally generous portions. All of this is at reasonable prices.

Soon our food was brought to us three orders at a time, by a friendly waiter. It took about 20 minutes for all the orders to be delivered, but it was worth the wait. Within the group, we ordered flounder sandwiches, crab cake sandwiches and more. The flounder sandwich had three flounder fillets stuffed in a large roll and the fried shrimp consisted of 8 exceptionally large, butter-fried shrimp nicely breaded and fried. I was told by those that had it that the crab cake sandwiches were excellent. After eating, we walked two blocks down the street to the Harris Tower where we were welcomed by our tour guides. They showed us their outdoor signal exhibit and the QR code that explained its operation. Then we were led upstairs to the control room of the tower.



When we all gathered in the large tower room, we were given a guided tour of its history and operations. The information imparted was extensive and highly technical. Then our hosts ran a simulation that allowed some of the group to switch trains from one track to another and see the changes on the large indicator board. A host would shout out "Train #8 from track 4 to track 7!!!" Then we had to figure out how to get the train from point A to point B. The tour leaders also showed how it was impossible to throw switches that would derail the train as it went over one switch and on to another. This is why it was called an "interlocking" system. It is important to note that the tower is not connected to any switches anymore.

Later we observed Amtrak's westbound Pennsylvanian train number 43 come through, plus several freight trains and a work train. One of the people involved in restoring the tower to (simulation only) operation discussed how he and his partner completed the work while commuting from New York to Harrisburg on weekends.

Soon it was time to catch our homebound Keystone train. We all departed with our brains quite full of a great deal of new knowledge and feeling that this was just an incredible experience. Thanks to all the guides from the Harrisburg Chapter!

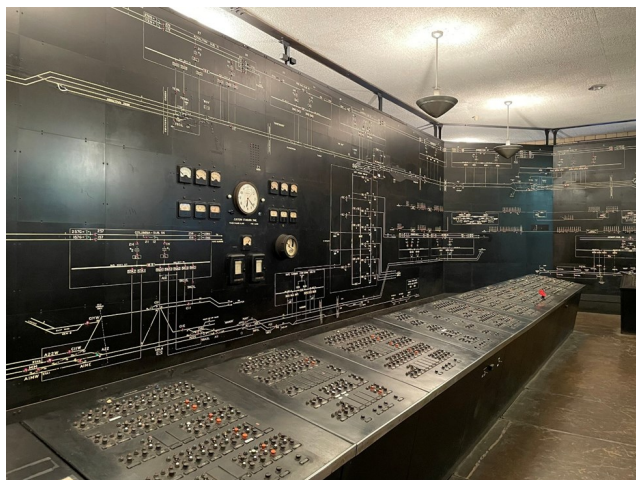


Left: Looking at the passing Amtrak Pennsylvanian #43, picture by John Smith. Right: Operating the tower control levers during the simulation, picture by Steve Ferrell

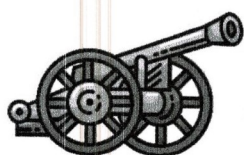


Visiting Harrisburg's "Harris" Tower and Power Director's Office (continued)

Close-up of the tower's switch board at Harris Tower, photo by Steve Ferrell

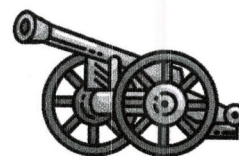


Gettysburg



1-Day Spring Adventure

Sunday, MAY 17, 2026



\$205.00 Per Person

Join the **Lancaster Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society** as we explore our country's Civil War history in Gettysburg. Our day begins at the Gettysburg National Military Park Museum & Visitor Center where we will watch a short film narrated by Morgan Freeman, and then view the 42' high x 377' long "Battle of Gettysburg" Cyclorama depicting the final assault on July 3, 1863, aka "Pickett's Charge", painted by the French artist Paul Philippoteaux. A guide will join our ELITE Coach for a 2-hour tour of the Gettysburg Battlefield with sight stops along the way. We will return back to the museum to use bathroom facilities before being dropped off in Lincoln Square where you can shop and grab lunch on your own. Board our bus or opt to walk a short distance to the Gettysburg Railway Station to board Patriot Rail's newest restored 1950's-era Budd passenger coaches with luxurious seating for our 90-minute round trip ride. If you missed lunch in town, the train has a concession car or bring your own snacks on-board. Before heading for home, we will travel to Thurmont to enjoy a buffet dinner at the Mountain Gate Restaurant.

Adventure Includes: Gettysburg Foundations Museum, Film and Cyclorama, Guided Tour of the Battlefield, Gettysburg Excursion Railway Fare, Buffet Dinner at the Mountain Gate Restaurant, ELITE Coach Transportation, all Applicable Taxes, Fees and Gratuities. Lunch is not included.

Depart: 7:00 AM from Lancaster Shopping Center, 1515 Lititz Pike, Lancaster, PA

Aproximate Return: 8:45 PM Lancaster Shopping Center



Registration Form or questions, call 717-917-5137 or cindykendig@gmail.com

GETTYSBURG SPRING TRIP, Sunday May 17, 2026

Price: \$ 205.00 per person Cash or check only (We are unable to accept credit cards.)

LIMITED SPACE - REGISTER EARLY!

We suggest, if registering with family or friends as a group, mail all forms and payments together.
Refunds for cancellations on/before May 1, 2026 will incur a \$20 non-refundable cancellation fee.
No refunds for cancellations after May 1, 2026.

Make check payable to:

Lancaster Chapter NRHS

Mail Registration Form & Payment to:

Cindy Kendig, 105 Harrison Ave, Christiana, PA 17509-1209

SAVE THIS PORTION FOR YOUR RECORDS

You will receive a confirmation email upon the receipt of your payment.
For more information, call Cindy 717-917-5137 or email cindykendig@gmail.com

Registration and Payment Form

Please Print

GETTYSBURG SPRING TRIP, Sunday May 17, 2026**Detach and mail with your \$ 205.00 Registration Payment**

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ St _____ Zip _____

Email _____ Cell Phone _____

Would you like to receive information on future trips? YES NO

Make check payable to:

Lancaster Chapter NRHS

Mail Registration Form & Payment to:

Cindy Kendig, 105 Harrison Ave, Christiana, PA 17509-1209

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!**CHAPTER EVENTS AND MEETINGS—2026 SCHEDULE**

March 15th, Sunday, 3:00 PM, Chapter Meeting at Christiana Freight House
2:00 PM, Board Meeting

April 20th, Monday, 7:30 PM, Chapter Meeting at Christiana Freight House

May 17th, Sunday - all day - Gettysburg Spring Bus Trip: Battlefield Tour, followed by
Gettysburg Railway 90 Minute Ride and Dinner

May 18th, Monday, 7:30 PM, Chapter Meeting at Christiana Freight House

June 15th, Monday, 7:30 PM, Chapter Meeting at Christiana Freight House

July Meeting: “Away Meeting” - Date and Location to be determined

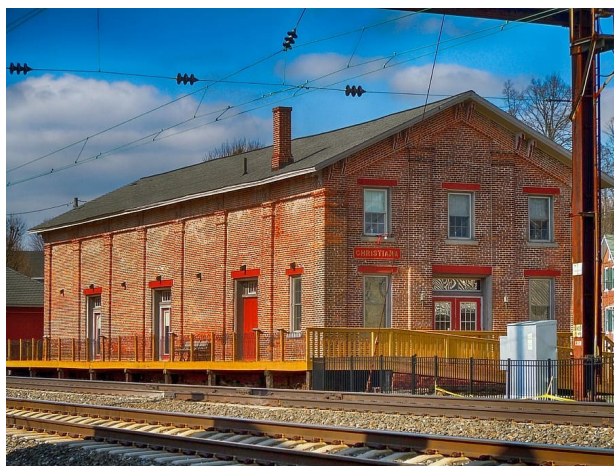
August 16th, Sunday, 3:00 PM, Strasburg Railroad Train Ride and Chapter Meeting

September 20th, Sunday, 3:00 PM, Annual Picnic Christiana Freight House
2:00 PM, Board Meeting

October 19th, Monday, 7:30 PM, Chapter Meeting at Christiana Freight House

November 20th, Friday, 6:00 PM, Annual Banquet—Location to be Determined

December 20th, Sunday, 3:00 PM Chapter Christmas Party at Christiana Freight House



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 2nd 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 Tom Steckler 610-593-2594 – email: THOMAZ@COMCAST.NET

"INSIDE THE BACK PAGE"
UPCOMING LANCASTER CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

(NO CHAPTER MEETING IN JANUARY OR FEBRUARY)

JANUARY 19th, 2026 - MONDAY - "UNDECORATING THE FREIGHTHOUSE" AT 7:00 PM.
ALL HELP IS APPRECIATED. LONG-TERM PLANNING MEETING TO FOLLOW.

MARCH 15, 2026 - SUNDAY, 3:00 PM CHAPTER MEETING AT CHRISTIANA FREIGHT HOUSE
10 RAILROAD AVENUE, CHRISTIANA, PA 17509

**CHAPTER MEETING MINUTES
DECEMBER 22, 2025**

- At 6:30 PM, Chapter Chaplin Lorrie Steffy opened with a prayer of Thanksgiving.
- Following the Chapter Christmas Party dinner, Glenn Kendig opened the meeting at 7:30 PM.
- There were 23 attendees, including 8 members of Christiana Historical society.
- Jim Donohue made a motion to accept the Minutes of the November meeting and was seconded by Steve Himpsl. The vote passed unanimously.
- Richard Rutledge gave the financial report.
- Lorrie Steffy reported on get-well cards sent to several ailing members.
- Glenn Kendig reported on the successful open house on December 13th and 14th. Sunday, the 14th, was a scratch due to snow. However, the Saturday crowd was very appreciative, especially of model railroad display operated by Glenn.
- Steve Himpsl advised of the following sales:

Strasburg Railroad Tickets 12 each at \$ 12.00 =	\$ 144.00
Railroadiana Sales	\$ 47.00
Donations to the Chapter	\$ 172.00
- Steve Himpsl reviewed the details of the May 17, 2026 bus tour to Gettysburg. Members were sent the flyer.
- Steve also presented the status of the deck railing at the Freight House. It has not been painted in over 20 years. The Chapter has a quote to powder-coat the metal railing, providing a permanent finish. There will be an "adopt a fence-section" campaign in March. There are 16 sections at \$ 150.00 per section.
- Lorrie Steffy advised the "goodie bags" have been sent to shut-in Chapter members.
- There will be an undecorating night at 7:00 PM on Monday, January 19th, 2026. There will be a Long-Term Planning meeting following the activity.
- Glenn Kendig closed the meeting at 8:00 PM sharp.

Respectfully Submitted, Jim Donohue for Tom Fluck



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COPY EDITOR:	JANE FERRELL		

NEXT CHAPTER MEETING

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

MARCH 15, 2026 - SUNDAY, 3:00 PM

CHAPTER MEETING

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



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CHRISTIANA, PA 17509-1416

10 RAILROAD AVENUE

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