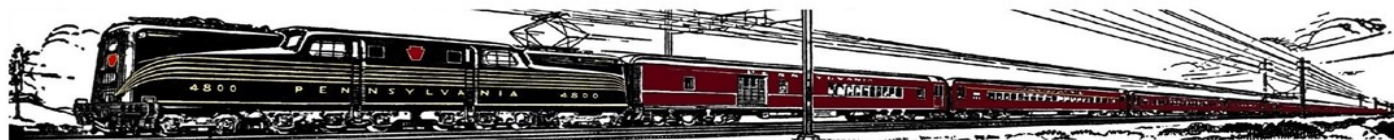


# LANCASTER DISPATCHER

1935-2026

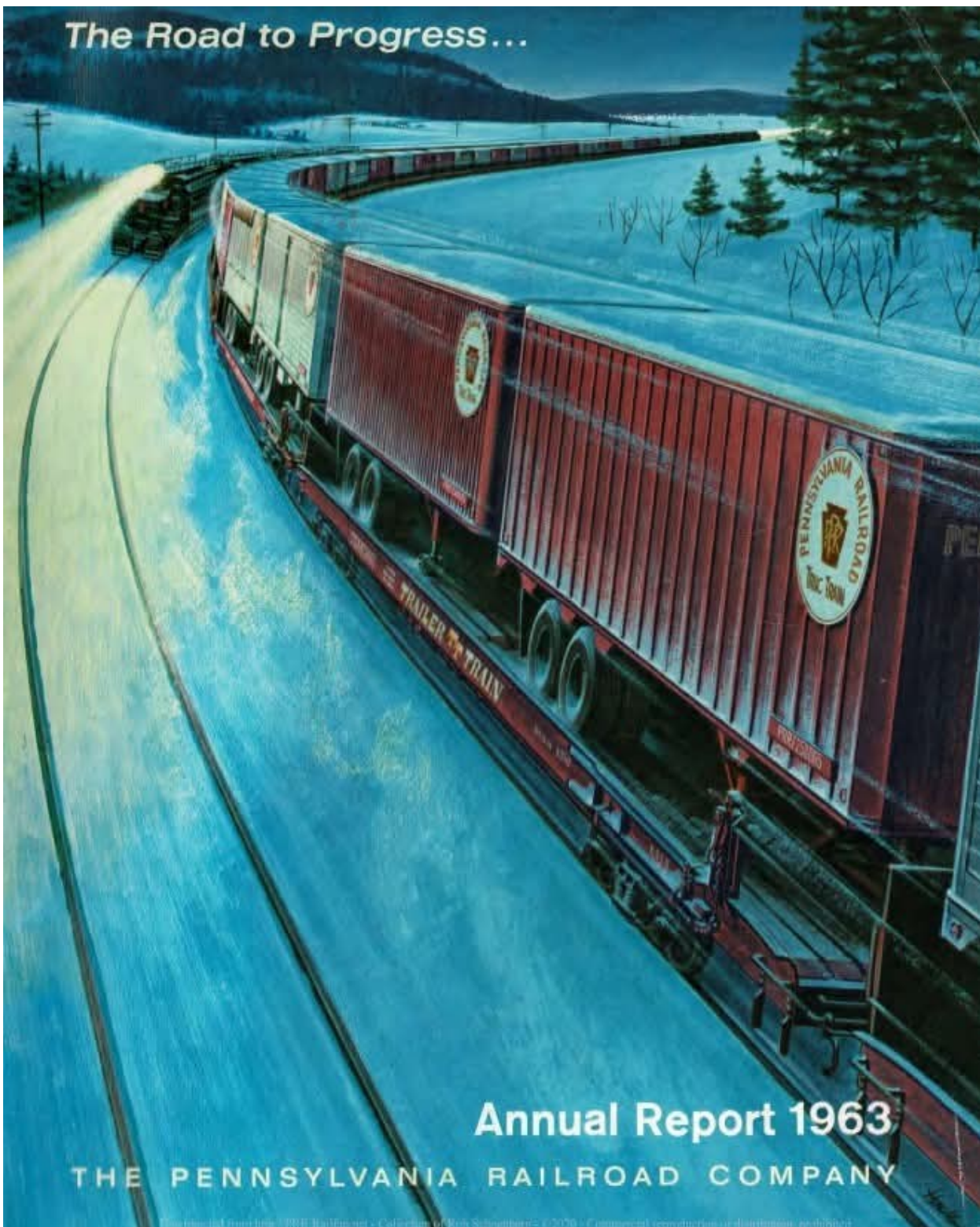


LANCASTER CHAPTER, INC., NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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MARCH 2026





## Railway News Flash

By Steve Ferrell

Gathered from press releases and revised for this publication

***March, 2026***

- Reading and Northern Railroad topped the one million mark in coal shipments again in 2025, for the third year in a row.
- Work has begun to place the first track in service on the Portal North Bridge on the Northeast Corridor. Beginning on February 13, 2026, Amtrak will perform the critical work to cutover one track of rail service from the 115-year-old Portal Bridge in Kearny, NJ to the new Portal North Bridge over the Hackensack River.
- On January 12<sup>th</sup>, SEPTA restored all morning express services on the regional rail system in Philadelphia. The return of the inspected and repaired Silverliner IV EMU cars allowed the increase of service on all lines. SEPTA has now completed repairs on 180 of the 223 50-year-old railcars.
- The proposed merger between the Norfolk Southern and Union Pacific railroads has been rejected by the Surface Transportation Board. Regulators stated that the application was incomplete with lack of full merger agreement, market share data and more. Notably, the proposal omitted billions in intermodal costs. Union Pacific vowed to press on, in the effort to acquire Norfolk Southern.
- New Jersey Transit introduced its newly renovated trainset on its River LINE from Trenton to Camden, New Jersey. Featuring a revamped interior and diesel engine overhaul, the continuing program should improve service on this line.
- On January 12<sup>th</sup> the B&O museum in Baltimore, MD held a ribbon cutting event to celebrate the finishing of the cosmetic restoration of the American Freedom Train number 1. This was formerly the Reading Railroad's 4-8-4 T1 steam locomotive 2101.
- Pennsylvania's Department of Transportation awarded about \$53 million for freight railroad infrastructure projects throughout the state. In Lancaster County, the Strasburg Rail Road received \$1.2 million to rehabilitate approximately 3,000 feet of track, improve a grade crossing and install permanent bulk transloading equipment.
- The former Meadow River Lumber Company's #1 Shay locomotive is currently being restored to operating condition at Steamtown in Scranton, PA.
- Northeast Rail Heritage, Inc, announced that it has acquired the only remaining SEPTA Silverliner III car. The car had been to Morrisville PA for scrapping. Sullivan Scrap Metals donated the car to the Northeast Rail Heritage which will cosmetically restore the car to its 1990's "Yellowbird" appearance when it was used to promote SEPTA's Airport Line. The EMU car will be moved to an SMS owned facility.
- In a dramatic reversal of the city's attitude, the City of Port Jervis initiated discussions with TOYX regarding a direct lease of the former Erie Railroad turntable site near downtown in a city owned site. TOYX serves as a banner for a group of projects, including the Tri-States Railway Preservation Society. Previously the city had terminated the lease for the display of their historic railcars and artifacts and instructed the group to vacate the site by July 16<sup>th</sup>.
- The Hudson tunnel project will halt February 6<sup>th</sup> due to lack of funding. This is because Federal money has been withheld since October. This accounts for 70% of the funding. Almost 1000 workers will be unemployed if the project stops.

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

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

Mar. 9, 1917 New York Connecting Railroad and Hell Gate Bridge dedicated by Samuel Rea and designer Gustav Lindenthal in special ceremony; special train brings PRR officers and directors from Philadelphia; bridge connects PRR and New Haven lines and permits through service to New England points; longest steel arch bridge in the world up to that time (1,017 ft.); only one of four tracks open; operated by steam until electrified in 1918.

Mar. 30, 1922 PRR places orders with five builders for 190 P70 coaches, 35 PB70 combines, and 25 baggage-mail cars; 20 dining cars are being built at Altoona, and the LIRR has ordered 50 cars.

Mar. 20, 1927 Automatic train control and cab signals placed in service between Camden and Atlantic City via Winslow Jct.; first U.S. installation of coder-continuous type ATC.

Mar. 13, 1932 PRR announces that as of 1931 it owned 5,534 locomotives, 275,725 freight cars and 7,249 passenger cars, or 12% of total U.S. rolling stock.

Mar. 17, 1932 Westbound Red Arrow derails at speed near Princeton Jct.; tender and 8 of 12 cars derailed; caused by dragging water scoop; 70 injured.

Mar. 4, 1937 National Railway Historical Society holds its annual banquet in a PRR dining car parked in Broad Street Station.

Mar. 10, 1942 2-1-1-buffet lounge observation car Jack's Narrows renamed Wake Island at ceremony in Chicago; done at suggestion of Pres. Roosevelt to honor the defenders of the island for their action last year as a morale booster at a time when the tide of war in the Pacific is still against the U.S.

Mar. 6, 1947 LIRR exhibits first of 10 new double deck MU cars; cars prove unpopular because of cramped face-to-face seating; also difficult to clean.

Mar. 12, 1952 Board reviews the status of the T1's, all 52 of which are now out of service, with only 19 stored in good running order; note that the maintenance costs are 2.5 times that of Class K4s; heavy running repairs are almost 3 times as great; T1's are 4 times as costly to operate as diesels; slipperiness did not work with PRR's grades; decides they are to be disposed of as soon as the equipment trust obligations are paid off.

Mar. 22, 1957 PRR announces sale of old 1870s westbound station at Ardmore to Suburban Square Shopping Center for \$200,000; to be demolished for store; waiting room already moved to new eastbound building; station was first to be sold as part of recent PRR campaign to sell stations to cut property taxes.

Mar. 9, 1962 PRR and NYC file merger application with ICC.

Mar. 21, 1967 By this date, 15 GG1's have been retired; 49 are in freight service and 75 in passenger service; of the latter, 31 have had high intake louvers installed to keep out fine snow and 31 have been equipped with four or more traction motors coated with DuPont's Nomex epoxy resin to prevent being shorted out by moisture.

Mar. 12, 1972 Two Penn Central freight trains, a 104-car coal train bound from Buffalo to a power plant near Harrisburg and a northbound 102-car freight, collide head-on at Herndon, Pa., killing four; engine crew of one train may have dozed off.

Mar. 11, 1977 Penn Central Company reports 4th quarter 1976 loss of \$71 million.

Mar. 9, 1982 Northbound Silver Star No. 82 departs Washington behind red GG1 No. 4877 and black GG1 No. 4881 borrowed from NJ Transit, making the last leg of the last run of conventional steam-heated equipment in long-distance Amtrak service.

**Tale of two Acela's,  
Amtrak's problems with the new next-generation Units.  
By Steve Ferrell**



**Acela II, Next Generation trainset at Wilmington, Delaware – Amtrak Promotional Photograph**

The original Acela trainsets have significantly worn out and need immediate replacement. These units are breaking down constantly and are not reliable. Aging components, hard to find parts forcing cannibalization and fabrication. More frequent breakdowns raise their operational costs, and schedule reliability.

Unfortunately, the Acela II's, made by Alstom in Hornell, NY, have been delayed too long in their implementation as the replacement for these worn-out original Acela's. Completed Acela II (Next Generation) trainsets have been sitting idle around the Amtrak system for over five years without entry into revenue service. These trainsets have been tested, reworked, and redesigned to work on the Amtrak Northeast Corridor during that time. On August 29<sup>th</sup>, 2025, Amtrak finally debuted the new units.

Initially Amtrak launched five Next Generation units, with the remaining scheduled service covered by the older Acela I units. Their plan is to increase Acela II trainsets in service incrementally over the next two years until the older trainsets are no longer needed and can be retired.

The debut of the Next Generation units came with much fanfare and reviews. Several of my rail riding buddies have ridden the new units and were impressed with the signage, seats, and smooth ride. Many experienced Amtrak riders came away with different views. Additionally, I check the daily on-time Acela Next Generation operations and they along with the older Acela units are seldom on schedule.



**Left: Amtrak Acela II Next Generation arriving at  
Philadelphia's 30<sup>th</sup> Street Station**

**(photo by Dan Murray)**

**My rail riding friend Dan Murray boarding the Acela II for his first ride on this trainset**

**(photo by John Smith)**



### **Tale of two Acela's, (continued)**

Rumor has it that Amtrak has had to remove a few new units from service for repairs and that the Next Generation units have broken down often. I frequently see on Intercity Rail Map delays of over an hour, while the regular Northeast Corridor trains are operating on time! Many of the problems and complaints include uncomfortable, rock-like seating. (My friends did not agree with this, but all agree that the seats on the regular Northeast Corridor trains are more comfortable), standees rather than seats in the café car and too-bright LED lighting that is counterproductive to relaxation. Hard to reach power outlets and tray table latches that are difficult to open add to their complaints. Another issue is that passengers who think they reserved a window seat find that they are sitting between two windows!

Amtrak technicians are aware of many problems and are being addressed. Car doors are failing often to open automatically at stations, forcing conductors to manually pry them open with emergency handles. Many automated features are said to be unreliable including touchless bathroom sinks and hand dryers that fail to trigger and clogged toilets.



**First Class Dining on Acela Next Generation train set – Photo from Amtrak Promotional Materials**

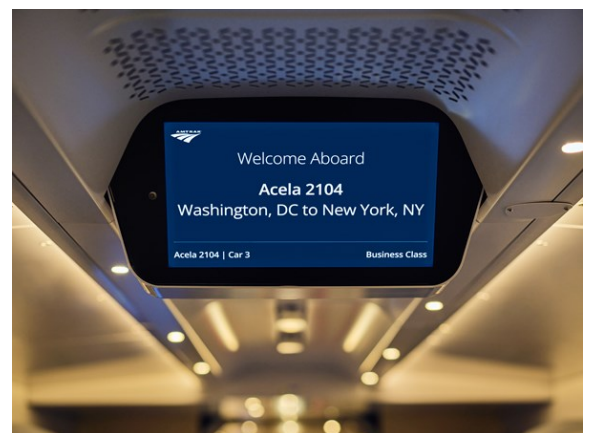


**Café Car, with self-service options on the left and full-service attendant on the right – Amtrak promotional photograph.**

Operational challenges include speed limitations. While these trains can operate at 160mph, the Northeast Corridor infrastructure restricts them to slower speeds except for exceedingly small segments of its route. Dealing with poor on-time performance is another major problem. The slower than the original Acela by several minutes! Additionally, the whole project is more than three years behind schedule due to modeling failures and the need for extensive retrofitting of already-built cars.

Currently Amtrak is working with the manufacturer (Alstom) on correcting many of these faults. Upgrades and fixes are currently being developed and implemented. They are especially working hard to improve the seating issues and all other problems.

**Improved signage with multiple displays throughout train car – Amtrak Promotional Photo.**



### The Shore Fast Line, a unique Interurban Line

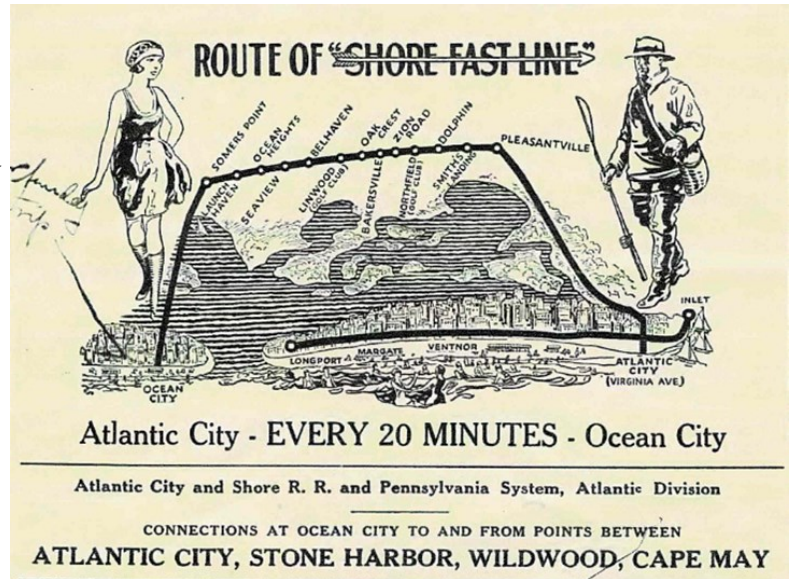
By Steve Ferrell, with photographs courtesy of the Archives of the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania

I was researching a future article about trains to the South New Jersey shore when I came across an interesting Interurban line that was the Shore Fast Line. I have always had a fascination with Interurbans which are a trolley line that operates between two cities or towns. Often these lines utilized heavier rolling stock than local transit trolleys, but not always. Interurbans had their heyday between 1900 and 1940 and declined as automobile and bus travel increased.

The Shore Fast Line, also known as the Atlantic City and Shore Railroad Company, operated a trolley line within Atlantic City plus an Interurban line between Ocean City and Atlantic City. At the time of its inception, the rail line could not travel directly across the mouth of the bay to Ocean City and had to take a much longer route inland serving Pleasantville and Somers Point among other stops.

Starting in 1907 and operating until 1948 when a hurricane damaged its viaduct, this line served Atlantic City, Pleasantville, Northfield, Linwood, Somers Point and Ocean City. What makes this interurban so different is that it operated from the boardwalk at Atlantic City and terminated at the boardwalk of Ocean City. Running from one Atlantic Ocean boardwalk to another was unique. The Short Line block on the Monopoly game board is named after this railroad by the Atlantic City Quakers who assisted in developing the famous and popular board game. This is a popular story but not totally confirmed.

The rail line drew power from both overhead and third-rail electric power. When the line traveled over the inland tracks of West Jersey and Seashore Railroad, it had to use their third-rail power. The eleven-mile route of the line featured a two-mile trestle while crossing the Great Egg Harbor Bay near Sommers Point into Ocean City proper. There were numerous grade crossings as the line came into more settled areas in Ocean City. At Pleasantville Junction, the Shore line connected with the Pennsylvania-Reading Seashore line allowing connections to Camden and Philadelphia and Wildwood and Cape May.



The Shore Fast Line at its terminus in Atlantic City



Pleasantville, New Jersey's Shore Fast Line

### The Shore Fast Line, a unique Interurban Line (continued)

Operationally, the line used frequent (twenty-minute headways) service during the summer peak season to allow beachgoers to reach the shore and the boardwalks of either Atlantic City or Ocean City, New Jersey.

The rolling stock was often second hand, including interurban cars purchased from the Ocean City Electric Railway in the 1920's. In 1930 a Brilliner demonstrator was introduced that featured a streamline design by Ray Loewy. Following this successful design, the railroad ordered 24 Brilliner cars with improved speed and a smoother ride.

When operations ceased in 1948, buses and automobiles provided better connections to the boardwalk and beaches between the two end points of Atlantic City and Ocean City. Indeed, trolley service of both local and interurban types were being phased out around the nation.



On the Great Egg Harbor Causeway



At the Ocean City Terminus on 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue and the boardwalk

### Shore Fast Line Advertising Brochure

**"SHORE FAST LINE"**  
*Summer Schedule*  
Commenced on July 4, 1925 Daylight Saving Time

PLEASANTVILLE      NORTHFIELD

LINWOOD      SOMERS POINT

Cool, Shady Woods -  
Fields, Flowers and Birds -  
Call you to  
**PICNIC**  
Along the  
**"SHORE FAST LINE"**  
*"The Road of Super-Service"*  
TURN TO TIME TABLE

**"SHORE FAST LINE"**  
*Summer Schedule*  
Commenced on July 4, 1925 Daylight Saving Time

**Every 20 Minutes  
between  
Atlantic City  
BOARDWALK AT VIRGINIA AVE.  
and  
Ocean City  
BOARDWALK AT EIGHTH ST.**

Atlantic Ave. and Longport Division  
TO INLET, VENTNOR  
MARGATE AND LONGPORT

**From the Photo Collection of Chapter Member Fred Schneider II**  
**(Always a pleasure to present Fred's work and his collection)!**



PC Media - West Chester Local 1971



PRR G-5s 5716 Octororo Branch (John J. Bowman Jr. photo)



PRR E44 EB Columbia 1962



PRR Boy Scout Special Cynwyd PA in 1957  
(John J. Bowman Jr. photo)



PRR GG1 at Washington Union Station ca. 1935  
H.W. Pontin photo



PRR Paoli local near Radnor 1964  
William D. Middleton photo

**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](mailto:cindykendig@gmail.com)

Registration and Payment Form

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**GETTYSBURG SPRING TRIP, Sunday May 17, 2026**

**SOLD OUT**

**The May Gettysburg bus trip is sold out. If you are interested in receiving a notification of upcoming trips, please let the chapter know your contact name and email address.**

### Deck Railing Protection Project

The metal railing on our deck is in need of a paint job. It has not been painted in over 25 years. The best way to protect the metal is to powder coat the metal for a long-lasting finish. We have found (with Smoke's help) a local company that will do the job at a reasonable price.

We ask your support for this project by donating funds to do a section of the railing (there are 16 sections). Each section will cost \$150.00.

To recognize your support, we will display the names of donors at the station, near the deck.

Checks can be sent to our treasurer:

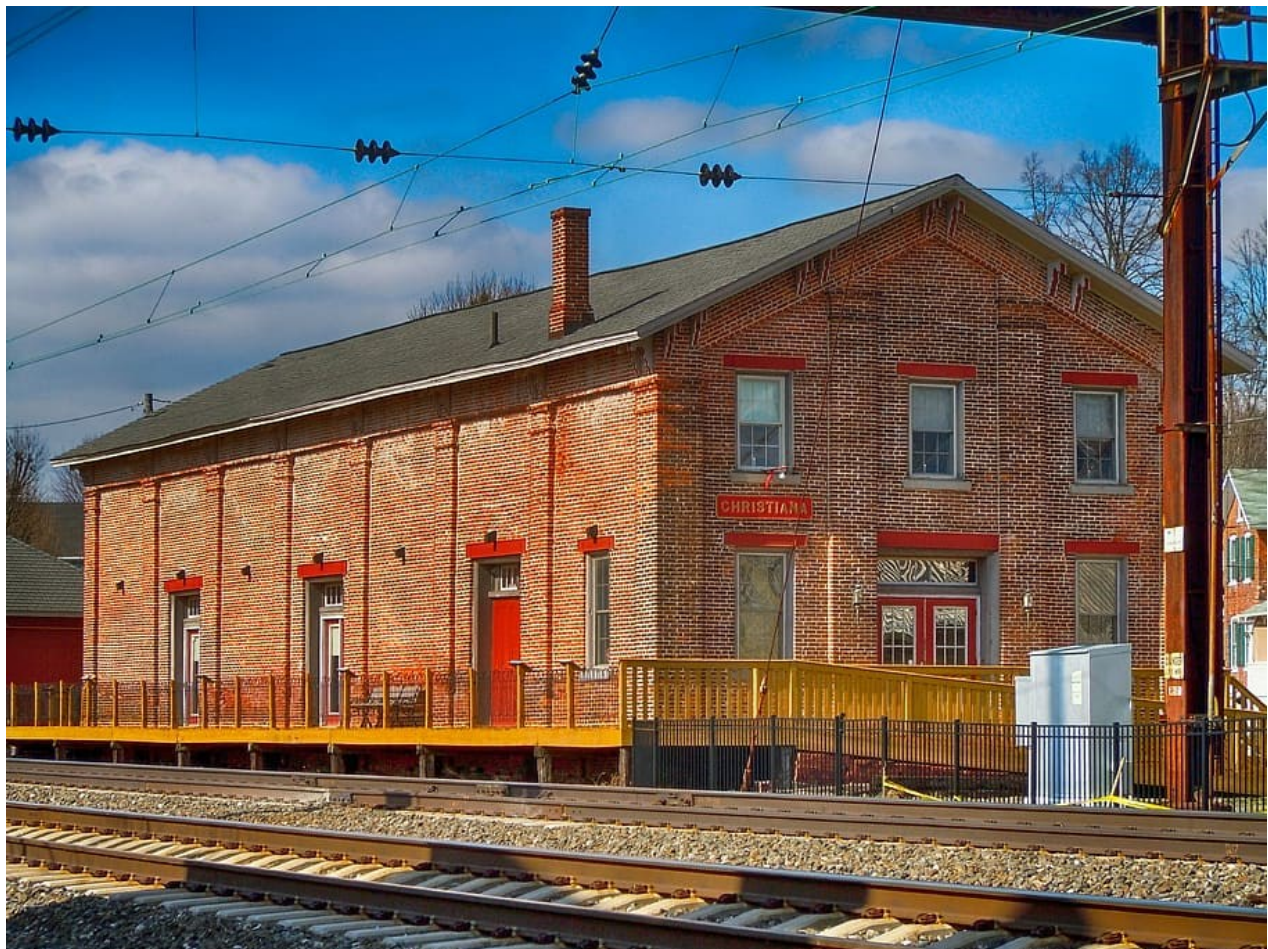
Richard Rutledge  
2935 Woodshead Terrace,  
York, Pa 17403-9752

....or bring your donation to a meeting. Please note "Railing" on your check.

The project will be done by late spring.

As always, the Chapter appreciates and needs your support!

THANK YOU!



"INSIDE THE BACK PAGE"  
UPCOMING LANCASTER CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

MARCH 15, 2026 - SUNDAY, 2:00 PM BOARD MEETING,  
3:00 PM CHAPTER MEETING AT CHRISTIANA FREIGHT HOUSE  
10 RAILROAD AVENUE, CHRISTIANA, PA 17509

**Lancaster Chapter member, Mark Hoffman will present the program on March 15th at our next meeting, at the freight station, at 3:00pm. The topic is on the Downingtown and Lancaster PRR line which will include the present day New Holland Branch.**

**2026 Meeting 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 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



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## 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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FIRST CLASS MAIL

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CHRISTIANA, PA 17509-1416

10 RAILROAD AVENUE

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