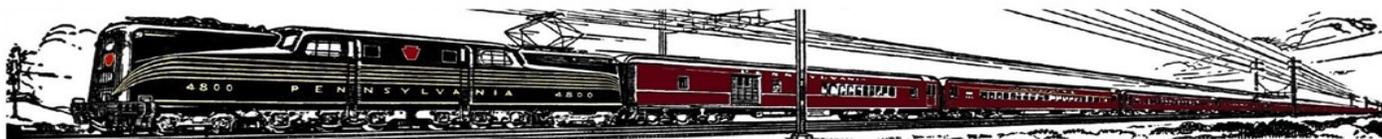


# LANCASTER DISPATCHER

1935-2025



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JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2025



Strasburg Railroad # 89 by John V. Smith III



## Railway News Flash

By Steve Ferrell

Gathered from press releases and revised for this publication

**January - February, 2025**

In November 2024, Amtrak added a new “ticketed” passenger waiting area within Washington DC’s Union Station. This alleviates the crowded and street person riddled waiting areas by the gates. This new waiting room is a much more secure area and is restricted to ticket holders only with a staffed desk at the entry.

Amtrak set an all-time ridership record in fiscal year 2024, welcoming a historic 32.8 million customers.

From Dan Cupper: Alstom has produced 270 units of its order for 28 Amtrak’s Acela Alevia Liberty trainsets. They expect to see the 160-mph trains inaugurated in the spring of 2025. Each new trainset is comprised of two power cars and nine passenger cars. Every consist includes first and business class coaches and a stand-up bistro car and will have a capacity for 386 passengers

A fire possibly involving diesel fuel in the yard erupted at 1110pm at Amtrak’s Ivy City Maintenance facility in Washington D.C. Before being brought under control, some train cars were damaged by radiant heat. A Phase 1 Heritage locomotive, P42 #161 was surrounded by flames and later showed visible external damage.

Amtrak and famous chef, restaurant owner and consultant, Stephen Starr have taken first class Acela dining to a new level with a new Seasonal Menu. The newly improved seasonal menu features Tandoori Chicken, Baked Manicotti and “bold” Chicken Enchiladas, all from his various restaurants.

SEPTA has postponed the large 21.5% fare hike following Governor Shapiro’s announcement that stop-gap funding of \$153 million will be directed toward SEPTA. Fare increases of 7.5% did take effect on December 1<sup>st</sup> of 2024, however.

New Jersey Transit’s Board of Directors has awarded a contract for a new operator for the heavily used Hudson-Bergen Light Rail system. The contract was awarded to ACI-Herzog JV. The agreement includes operation and the maintenance of the light rail vehicles, infrastructure, and right-of-way. The current contractor, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Rail Corp (which built the system and has here-to-fore operated it) will assist the transition to the new operator.

Following a 30-hour journey down the Hudson River, the first of three massive arches to support the new Portal North Bridge arrived on November 26<sup>th</sup> at the construction site. The new bridge will replace the current 114-year-old swing bridge. The new bridge is a fixed span, eliminating the need for opening and closing and possible disruptions. The Metropolitan Transportation Authority’s board approved a congestion tolling plan for Manhattan. This plan, when enacted, will launch a \$9 toll for drivers entering Manhattan from below 60<sup>th</sup> street. They will need to get it approved by the Federal Highway Commission. The hope is to cut down traffic in central Manhattan and encourage use of public transportation by commuters.

Grand Central Madison, the underground terminal for Long Island Railroad at Grand Central Terminal has won the UNESCO’s 2024 Prix Versailles Interior Award for one of the world’s most beautiful passenger station list.

About 3,500 riders had to be evacuated from two trains in New York after a three-hour subway power outage in Brooklyn. The outage disrupted service on the A, C, F, and G lines. Hundreds of transit workers, firefighters and NYPD officers worked quickly to assist riders on the two trains to get to safety. At least one person had to be hospitalized.

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

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

January 1, 1906 William Symmes Richardson (1873-1931) joins the architectural firm of McKim, Mead & White as a partner; he takes over much of the Penn Station detail work from Charles Follen McKim, whose health is failing, and who begins withdrawing from active business; in effect, Richardson is the true architect of the building except for the overall concept.

January 15, 1906 New main line overhead coal wharf and water station spanning 13 tracks opens at Thorndale, replacing one at Glen Loch; four freight trains in each direction can be fueled simultaneously to avoid delays.

January 23, 1911 J.P. Morgan sets new record in traveling from Washington to New York in PRR special train in 3:55.

January 26, 1916 PRR Board authorizes construction of Coatesville Branch from Pomeroy to works of Midvale Steel & Ordnance Company in Coatesville.

January 31, 1926 PRR announces it has ordered 100 13,000-gallon tenders from Baldwin Locomotive Works to reduce water stops by heavy freight locomotives.

January, 1931 Aluminum dining car chairs by the Aluminum Company of America (ALCOA) placed on the Broadway Limited, Twentieth Century Limited, and other top trains.

January 19, 1956 First westbound run of PRR container-on-flat-car (COFC) service leaves Kearny en route to Chicago in partnership with Rail-Trailer Company and Spector Freight Systems, Inc., of Chicago; "Mobil Van" container system is developed by Clark Equipment Company and manufactured by Fruehauf Trailer Company of Detroit.

January 19, 1961 Second major storm of winter dumps a foot of snow east of Harrisburg; 86 electric locomotives fail; trains arrive in Washington up to 9:33 late, interfering with travel to President Kennedy's inauguration.

January, 1966 PRR and Reading approve plan of City of Philadelphia to connect Suburban Station with Reading lines by a tunnel under Center City to be financed by federal grants under the Mass Transportation Act of 1964.

January 30, 1971 Last day of passenger service at Penns Neck station on Princeton Branch.

January 6, 1976 Amtrak board authorizes purchase of Northeast Corridor from Penn Central for \$85.1 million rather than lease from Conrail.

January 5-6, 1976 Amtrak E60 No. 965 and five "Amfleet" cars make a trial run between New York and Harrisburg on No. 43-42.

January 6, 1976 Two MP54's replace one "Jersey Arrow" car on the Princeton "dinky" shuttle; the longer wheelbase of the "Jersey Arrow" caused greater wear on the curve at Princeton Jct. station.

January 6, 1976 SEPTA agrees to buy Reading's Newtown, Doylestown and Chestnut Hill Lines and Penn Central's Chestnut Hill, and West Chester Lines, which are not included in Final System Plan, plus 30th Street Station and Reading Terminal for \$7 million; 20% to be paid by Urban Mass Transportation Administration and 80% by Pennsylvania.

January 10, 1981 Amtrak GG1 No. 4934 heads a special movement to deliver the heavyweight Pullman Lotos Club owned by Peter Tilp from Penn Station to the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania.

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

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

February 14, 1906 PRR tests Strang gasoline-electric railcar Ogerita on Frazer-West Chester line and Downingtown & Lancaster Branch; the Ogerita has been built by the J.G. Brill Company with power plant by the Strang Electric Railway Car Company of New York City.

February 2, 1936 PRR operates a Snow Train with 256 passengers from Philadelphia to Bear Mountain, N.Y., via the West Shore Railroad from Jersey City.

February 6, 1941 K4s No. 5338 streamlined at Juniata Shops for The Jeffersonian to Raymond Loewy design similar to that used for The South Wind; tender No. 6862 streamlined on Feb. 18th.

February 6, 1951 The Broker No. 733, Jersey City-Bay Head Jct. commuter train, derailed at excessive speed on temporary bridge over New Jersey Turnpike at Woodbridge, N.J. during evening rush hour; 85 killed and about 330 injured; train was exceptionally crowded because of strike, which had shut down CNJ's NY&LB trains.

February 2, 1961 Philadelphia-Bowie race track special derailed leaving main line at Arundel, Md.; of 2 diesels, 9 coaches, diner and tavern car, all but last four cars derail; 6 killed and 243 injured; 5 cars scrapped; train was doing 55 MPH in 15 MPH zone.

February 20, 1966 SEPTA schedule improvements and equipment extended to Paoli, Media/West Chester and Wilmington commuter lines, from which they had been barred previously by Delaware County's refusal to join SEPACT.

February 4, 1971 Penn Central begins operating the "Baggage Car", MPB54 combine No. 400 (ex-PRR 4549) fitted up as a bar car, on the Paoli line; serves coffee in morning and cocktails in evening in lieu of bar carts; 15-foot bar in old baggage compartment is decorated with walnut paneling, old locomotive prints and timetables.

February, 1971 New shop being built at Sunnyside Yard to service "Metroliners" and "Jersey Arrows."

February 1, 1976 Samuel H. Lee and Jerry Cohen write a letter to the New York Times posing as Charlie Brown's cartoon dog Snoopy protesting Amtrak's new policy of banning all pets from passenger areas.

February 11, 1976 Amtrak assumes operation of Penn Station and Sunnyside Yard maintenance of equipment forces.

February 24, 1976 Amtrak assumes operation of Wilmington Shops.

February 1, 1981 Amtrak shortens conventional Northeast Corridor schedules Nos. 181, 183, 187, 180 and 184 by up to 0:36 to as little as 3:34 as AEM7 locomotives placed in service; The Pennsylvanian adds stop at Ardmore for suburban passengers;

February 2, 1981 "Metroliner" cars Nos. 801 and 813 begin two-week test in revenue service on Harrisburg trains Nos. 603-608 to see if they can handle the frequent start-stop conditions; soon expanded to cover Nos. 609-612.

February, 1981 SEPTA General Manager David Gunn tells the Philadelphia Bulletin that SEPTA is in such bad financial shape that by the time the Center City Commuter Connection is completed, there may be no commuter trains.

February, 1981 Conrail CEO L. Stanley Crane appears before the House Subcommittee on Transportation & Commerce and repeats demand that Conrail be relieved of passenger service; NJ DOT Commissioner Louis Gambaccini calls for creation of Northeast Corridor Corporation to perform all passenger service on NEC and suburban lines to eliminate division between Amtrak and various state authorities.

## Huntingdon Station and Environs

By Jim Donohue

Each fall I go on a fishing trip with my good friend Rodger Johnson. This year we chose the Little Juniata River in Huntingdon County. I knew that the Norfolk Southern's ex-PRR Middle Division mainline paralleled the river, taking advantage of the gradients through the Allegheny Mountains.

Staying in downtown Huntingdon, we were just a two-minute walk from the train station. The current Amtrak "shack" is an embarrassment (a new one is under construction) but the original Pennsylvania Railroad station remains an impressive structure. A little research produced interesting photos of the depot in its heyday.

Located about halfway between Harrisburg and Pittsburgh, the Huntingdon station sits on the banks of the Juniata River where Fourth Street crosses the waterway. The modest building is covered in siding and sports a simple gabled roof.

A large brick passenger and freight station stands to the north of the Amtrak structure, and was erected in 1872 by the Pennsylvania Railroad (PRR) to replace a smaller depot. The two-story building is marked by a strong rhythm of bays created by the regular placement of stylized pilasters across the facades. Many of the building's features, such as the paired, round arch windows and the brackets at the roofline, belong to the then-popular Italianate style of architecture that was associated with idealized country or suburban settings.

When the station was first built, it was actually oriented to the north because the land to the south was occupied by the Pennsylvania Main Line Canal. After the waterway suffered flood damage in 1889 and was closed, the railroad removed the tracks from Allegheny Street and relocated them to the canal bed to take advantage of its greater surface area, level gradient and generous curves. The station served passengers until 1965 when it was shuttered by the PRR.<sup>1</sup>



Above, left: The original PRR station as seen today. Photo by the author.



Above, a post card of the well manicured station. Date unknown. Source: Library of Congress



Above, left: The NE corner view. The building now serves as an antique store. Photo by the author.



Above, the same view in the 1970's after closure. Source: Library of Congress

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.greatamericanstations.com/stations/huntingdon-pa-hgd/> (presented by Amtrak)

Huntingdon Station and Environs (continued)



Above, today's "Amshack" station. Construction on the new structure is to the left.

Right: The PRR station sign remains in its rightful place over the now-antiques store. Photos by the author.



Adjacent to the station is "Hunt" Tower. It protected an interlocking to the west. Today it houses the Huntingdon Chamber of Commerce and is on the National Register of Historic Places.



Left: track side  
Center: Allegheny Street side  
Right: Historic Plaque  
Photos by the author



Left: Hunt tower in PRR era, in relation to the passenger station (Library of Congress photo)  
Right: NS hi-rail on 4th Street downtown.  
Photo by the author.



**Huntingdon Station and Environs (continued)**



Above: Norfolk Southern pusher on west-bound empty hopper train, crossing the Little Juniata River on a magnificent stone arch bridge.



Above: East bound general merchandise freight peaking through the early fall foliage.  
Both photos by the author.

Final comment: alas, we saw far more trains than we did fish! So what were we there for?

## Rambling on a Winter Day Through South Jersey and Southeast Pennsylvania

By Stephen B. Ferrell

The snow was lightly falling as I left my home for Exton station to catch the 7:30AM inbound SEPTA train to Philadelphia 30<sup>th</sup> Street Station. The local weather forecasts called for 1-3 inches in the area. Once onboard, I met Chuck, a rail riding buddy and also a Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania volunteer. We had a smooth ride on our Silverliner V car into Philadelphia's 30<sup>th</sup> Street Station. It would continue to snow lightly throughout the day, amounting to a minimal amount and melting by the end of the day. After breakfast we caught our SEPTA train to Trenton.

SEPTA's Trenton train arrived on time to catch the next River Line light rail train. The River Line is a diesel light rail line, operated for NJT by Bombardier, running from Trenton to Camden, NJ. The rolling stock is Stadler GTW diesel MU cars built in Switzerland. The line runs on tracks formerly used by the Pennsylvania Railroad. Originally, this was the Camden and Amboy line. NJT now owns this line and Conrail-shared-assets has exclusive access to the line overnight for freight service.

We traveled southbound, through Trenton, stopping at two stations within the city. The line is double tracked in Trenton and Camden and mostly single track outside of the cities. After leaving the Trenton city limits, the line ran along the east bank of the Delaware River and the view was quite scenic. As we approached the town of Roebing, I noticed the museum where the factory was and it contains artifacts dedicated to the iron and steel works engineer who built the Brooklyn Bridge, among other items. At Burlington, the line ran down the middle of the street. We continued to have nice river and lake views and a lot of rural and forested areas on the east side of the right of way. We got off the River Line at Pennsauken Junction.

Our eastbound New Jersey Transit Atlantic City bound train from Philly rumbled over the Delair Bridge that spanned the Delaware River and into the station. We boarded the diesel powered (GP40PH) push-pull mode consist (in push mode) with five comet coaches in front. It was only a twenty-minute ride to our next transfer point at Lindenwold.

Detraining at Lindenwold, we found the tunnel connecting to the PATCO line. A Philly bound train was waiting for us at the platform, so I took a few quick pictures and we boarded. Our consist was made up of Budd designed PATCO II cars built by Vickers Canada and delivered in 1980. This system uses a third rail for power.



**Left:** Light dusting of snow at Trenton Transit Center

**Center:** Our River Line light rail train at Pennsauken Junction

**Right:** A New Jersey Transit train arriving at Pennsauken, passing over the Delair Bridge from Philadelphia

Originally, the PATCO line was called the Bridge line, running from Philadelphia to Camden over the Ben Franklin Bridge. It began service in 1936 with only four stations. Passengers could connect to the Pennsylvania-Reading Seashore Line at the Camden Broadway station. The last train on this line operated in 1968 and the current PATCO operation began service in 1969, using former Seashore Line trackage from Camden for some of the extended route to Lindenwold.

After rumbling over the Ben Franklin Bridge, with great river views, Chuck and I got off at 8<sup>th</sup> Street and went looking for a connection to Jefferson Station and the commuter rail system. We had to go above ground and walk a few blocks to the 11<sup>th</sup> street entranceway of the station, as the underground tunnel was closed for reconstruction.

### Rambling on a Winter Day Through South Jersey and Southeast Pennsylvania (continued)

At Jefferson Station Chuck suggested we have our meal at Jersey Mike's again! I was fine with that so we both had ham hoagies. Our next train was a Media-Elwyn line train that we would take only about six stops to the Clifton-Aldan station. We were pleased to see that we had the new Silverliner V cars (built by Hyundai-Rotem and assembled in South Philly) for this segment of our trip. At Clifton-Aldan station we detrained and walked down to street level and caught the Septa Route 102 trolley to 69<sup>th</sup> Street. We rode this line for our trip to 69<sup>th</sup> Street.

The 69<sup>th</sup> Street Terminal, now called the 69<sup>th</sup> Street Transportation Center, opened in 1908 when most roads were dirt and Upper Darby was a farming and milk production area. The city transit system had a trolley line and a subway elevated line that terminated here. Red Arrow Lines ran trolleys to West Chester, Ardmore, Glenolden and Media. Later busses were added. The P & W line ran their high-speed interurban cars to Stratford and Norristown. During the depression, the Red Arrow stub end trolley was converted into a loop system that ran overtop the concourse. This allowed for quick unloading and loading of trolleys and busses.

We now went through the terminal to the Norristown High Speed Line boarding area. The Norristown line, formerly the P&W line, has quite a history, and deserves an article in its own right. At one time in the 1960's this line had a bar and café car on it.

The two-car train of Asea-Brown Bovari N-5 cars that we boarded departed the terminal on time and headed towards Norristown. This line is third-rail powered and grade separated. Many stops on this line are flag stops; riders wanting to board must push a button near the station shed and riders wanting to get off need to signal the operator by pulling on a cord above their window.

Within 15 minutes, we arrived at our stop at Radnor. Here we had a walking connection to the SEPTA Paoli-Thorndale line and our trip home. It took us about 10 minutes to walk the ½ mile to the Commuter Rail station. Soon we boarded our train home. About half an hour later, I arrived at my stop at Exton. Chuck had about 15 more minutes to get to his stop at Thorndale, the end of the line.



Above, left: View from the PATCO train while crossing the Ben Franklin Bridge



Above, right: Trolley turning loop at 69<sup>th</sup> Street Transportation Center



Right: Norristown High Speed Line platform at 69<sup>th</sup> Street Transportation Center

**MARK YOUR CALENDAR!****CHAPTER EVENTS AND MEETINGS—2025 SCHEDULE****2025 Meeting Schedule**

March 16th, Sunday, 3:00 PM, Chapter Meeting at Christiana Freight House  
2:00 PM, Board Meeting

April 21st, Monday, 7:30 PM, Chapter Meeting at Christiana Freight House

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

June 16th, Monday, 7:30 PM, Chapter Meeting at Christiana Freight House

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

August 17th, Sunday, 3:00 PM, Strasburg Railroad Train Ride and Chapter Meeting

September 21st, Sunday, 3:00 PM, Annual Picnic Christiana Freight House  
2:00 PM, Board Meeting

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

November 21st, Friday, 6:00 PM, Annual Banquet—Location to be Determined

December 21st, Sunday, 3:00 PM Chapter Christmas Party at Christiana Freight House



"INSIDE THE BACK PAGE"  
UPCOMING LANCASTER CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

(NO CHAPTER MEETING IN JANUARY OR FEBRUARY)

MONDAY NIGHT, JANUARY 20th, 2025 "UNDECORATING THE FREIGHTHOUSE" AT 7:00 PM. ALL HELP IS APPRECIATED.

MARCH 16, 2025 - SUNDAY, 3:00 PM CHAPTER MEETING AT CHRISTIANA FREIGHT HOUSE  
 10 RAILROAD AVENUE, CHRISTIANA, PA 17509

**THE LANCASTER CHAPTER, NRHS  
 IS 90 YEARS OLD IN 2025!**



At the annual Chapter Christmas Party on December 15, 2024, 25-year members Lorrie and Donald Steffy were presented with their certificates. From left to right, Glenn Kendig, 2nd Vice President, Lorrie and Donald Steffy and Harold "Smoke" Shaak, Vice President.

The Freight Station Open House was held on December 14th and 15th jointly with the Christiana Lions Club. This year there were 4 operating hay-ride wagons making multiple trips throughout the borough to enjoy the Christmas decorations. Santa Claus arrived at 3 pm for the boys and girls to visit and take photos with. The decorated fire company engines escorted Mr. and Mrs. Santa Claus with his sleigh and reindeer for a parade around town. Glenn Kendig operated his 027 gauge trains upstairs, which was a big hit with everyone! Lots of free hot dogs, cookies, cupcakes, chips, candy, hot cocoa, and coffee were enjoyed by all. Donations were greatly appreciated and shared with the Lions Club. Lancaster Chapter received \$213 in donations; Strasburg ticket sales were \$192; and Railroadianna sales were \$63.

**In memoriam: Two brothers of Lancaster Chapter member Nelson Strubel recently passed away within one day of each other.**

**D. Edward Strubel, age 74, passed away on November 22nd, 2024 and Jay R. Strubel, age 86, passed away on November 23rd. Jay Strubel was a 50-plus year member of the Lancaster Chapter.**

**Our sympathies go out to Nelson Strubel who is currently living at Newport Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, 41 Newport Avenue, Room 202B in Christiana, PA 17509.**

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**NEXT CHAPTER MEETING**

**LANCASTER CHAPTER, INC., N.R.H.S.  
MARCH 16, 2025 - SUNDAY, 3:00 PM  
CHAPTER MEETING  
CHRISTIANA FREIGHT HOUSE  
10 RAILROAD AVENUE  
CHRISTIANA, PA 17509**

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