

Camden & Amboy Railroad - Bordentown, New Jersey

by Pierre Lacombe: West Jersey Chapter and Delaware Valley Chapter, NRHS

In mid-June 2025, the West Jersey Chapter of the NRHS submitted its Final Report for the NRHS Heritage Grant awarded in May 2023. The purpose of the grant was to assist West Jersey Chapter, Bordentown Historical Society, and Burlington County, NJ to prepare for the 200th anniversary of the first running of the John Bull steam locomotive on the Camden & Amboy Railroad (C&A RR) tracks in Bordentown, NJ.

To prepare Bordentown for its 200th Anniversary, we have developed three goals. The first goal was to nominate the Camden & Amboy Railroad of Bordentown as a Historic District to be recognized by the National Park Service. The second goal was to build a Heritage Railroad Park in Bordentown displaying 14 styles of rails built by the C&A RR during 1831-38. The third goal was to create a walking tour of the C& RR Historic District in Bordentown.

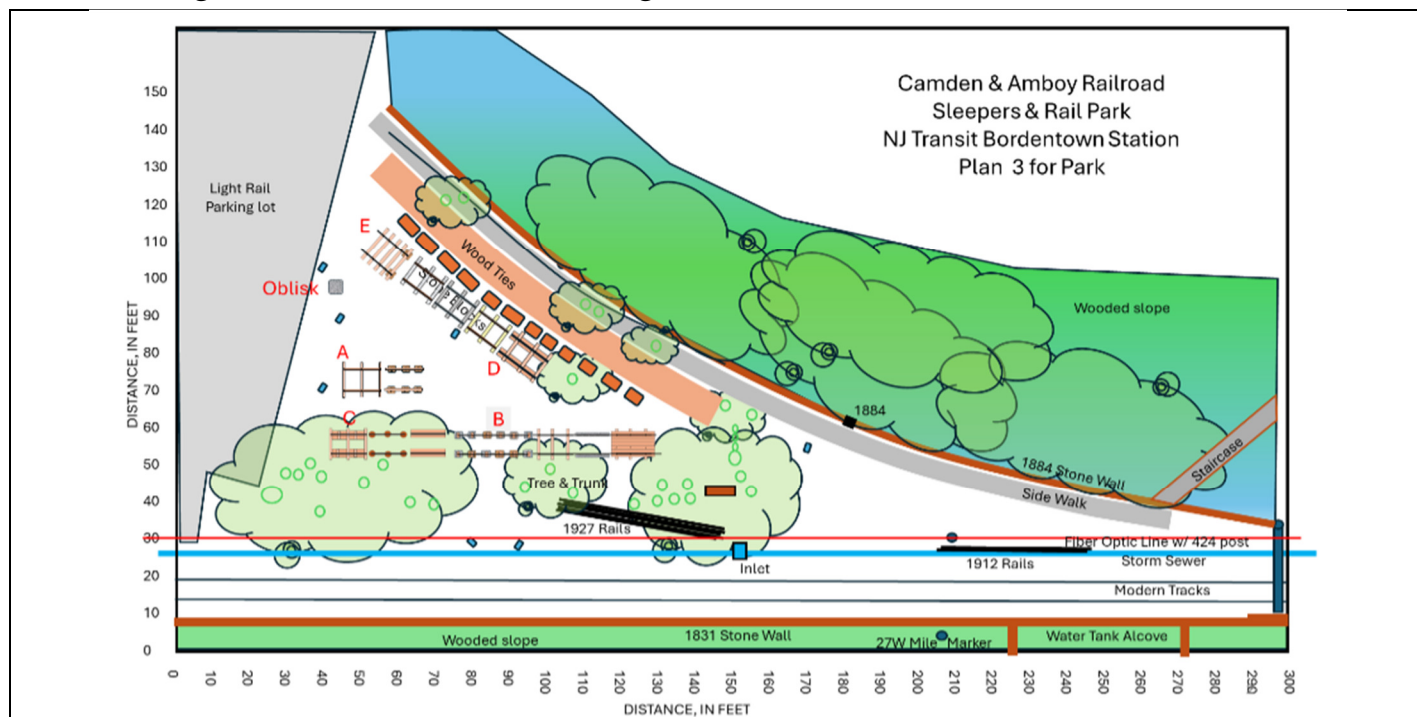


FIGURE 3: PLANS FOR THE CAMDEN & AMBOY RAILROAD HERITAGE PARK NEAR THE BORDENTOWN LIGHT RAIL STATION - Plans show the location of the 14 styles of railroad tracks built by the C&A RR during 1831 and 1837.

With the NRHS Grant, we completed and sent the 125-page nomination to the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office (NJ HPO). The nomination highlights the C&A RR Historic District in many ways. (Continued on p. 3)

NRHS NEWS – SEPTEMBER 2025

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Announcements

2025 NRHS Fall Conference – October 2 - 4, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

The Fall 2025 NRHS Conference takes place in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in early October. The Wisconsin Chapter, our host, has arranged a full weekend, including a rare tour of the private Christopher Transportation Museum and an excursion on the East Troy Electric Railroad. And of course, NRHS business meetings!

- The **Conference fee is \$175 for the full weekend**, or \$25 for members who wish to attend the Saturday meetings in person only. Note: Links are not active on the print News issue but are active in the Conference information sheet emailed to all members.
- **Registration** is now open and *closes when the event sells out*.
- **Conference headquarters** is at the Hyatt Regency Milwaukee, 333 West Kilbourn Avenue. Our group rate is \$184 per night, plus taxes. [Use this link to reserve](#). *Please note hotel space is limited. In the event our room block sells out, an overflow hotel will be arranged.*
- We're looking forward to seeing you in October! Cordially, Wisconsin Chapter and the NRHS Conference Team

Submission Deadlines for NRHS News

- October 2025 Convention issue (pdf) – deadline closed September 1, 2025
- December 2025 issue – deadline November 1, 2025
- January 2026 issue – no issue this month.
- February 2026 (pdf) – deadline January 15, 2026.

About the NRHS News

NRHS News is published nine times a year by the National Railway Historical Society. Six full-color issues are published usually in even-numbered months. The three remaining issues are printed in black-and-white and mailed to members across the year. Issues are available (pdf file) online at <https://admin.nrhs.com/NRHSNews/>

Valli HOSKI, Harrisburg Chapter NRHS, Editor. Alex Mayes, Potomac Chapter NRHS, Content Assistant. Elizabeth Guenzler, Central Coast Chapter NRHS, Editorial Assistant. Eileen Weber, St. Louis Chapter NRHS, Editorial Assistant. Email submissions to News@nrhs.com or mail to NRHS News, c/o Valli Hoski, P.O. Box 234, York Springs, PA, 17372. The address for the Society is: National Railway Historical Society, Inc., 505 South Lenola Road, Suite 226, Moorestown, NJ 08057. Membership information changes should be sent to Patti Webb at Membership@nrhs.com. Membership dues should be mailed to NRHS - Membership, PO Box 31074, St. Louis, MO 63131-0074

Camden & Amboy Railroad (continued)

(Continued from p. 1)

The C&A RR in Bordentown is part of the first mile of the first railroad to be built using ‘flat bottom T-rails’ (figure 1), dog head rail spikes, fish plates and rail plates. The hardware was engineered by Robert Stevens. Most railroads today use Stevens’ rail and hardware.



FIGURE 1 - Section of an original Camden & Amboy Railroad flat-bottom T-rail on top of a modern flat-bottom T-rail.

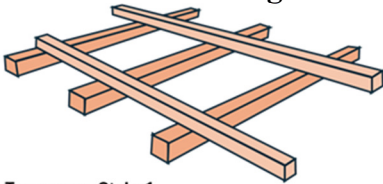


FIGURE 2 - West entrance of the Camden & Amboy Railroad Farnsworth Ave. Stone Arch Bridge built in 1831. The oldest active bridge built over flat bottom T-rails in the world.

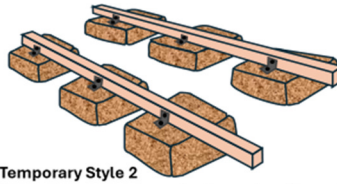
Bordentown is home to the oldest active vehicle bridge to pass over an active rail line in the United States (figure 2) and hosts the oldest continuously-used “at-grade” railroad crossing in America. Both the Farnsworth Ave. Stone Arch Bridge, and the “at-grade” crossing were built in 1831.

Of the seven commercial railroads that had passenger trains operate on their tracks prior to 1832, only the C&A RR right-of-way maintains its original 1831 integrity. The other six early commercial railroad rights-of-way have been demolished or widened, straightened, leveled and re-laid with flat-bottom T-rails. Of the first five steam locomotives used on railroads in America, only the *John Bull* was used for more than 20 years. The *Best Friend of Charleston* blew up within a year. The *Steam Waggon* and *DeWitt Clinton* were used for less than a year. The *Tom Thumb* was used only a few times, and the *Stourbridge Lion* was used for one day. The original *John Bull* is in the Smithsonian. The C&A RR Main Line is New Jersey’s first railroad. The C&A RR Branch Line to Trenton is New Jersey’s first railroad built using wood preservatives for the ties. The list of other railroading firsts attributed to the C&A RR is extensive.

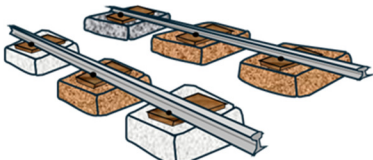
The NRHS Grant also helped with our two-and-a-half year effort to gain permission from New Jersey Transit to use a half-acre of their land at the intersection of the C&A RR Main Line built in 1831 and the C&A RR Branch Line built in 1837. Bordentown Mayor Jennifer Sciortino signed the contract with NJ Transit, and the City will accept responsibility for insurance and lawn maintenance of the Park. The Bordentown Heritage Railroad Park (figure 3), when completed in fall 2025, will display replicas of the 14 styles of railroad track built by the C&RR during 1831-37, as shown in figure 4 below.

Figure 4**Temporary Style 1**

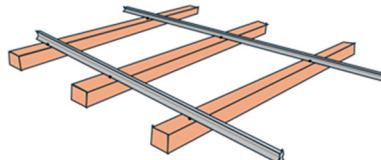
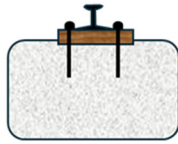
Wood ties and wood rails used to transport earth from the Bordentown Cut to Blacks Creek Causeway.

**Temporary Style 2**

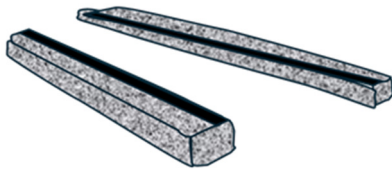
Stone sleepers and wood rails used on Stewart's Wharf. Were used to reassemble the *John Bull* steam engine upon its arrival from England. 85 sleepers remain at Wharf

**Permanent Style 1**

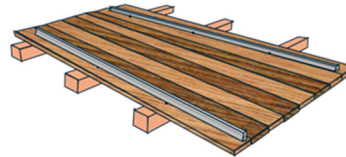
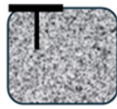
Stone blocks and Flat Bottom Rails used for about 27 miles

**Permanent Style 2**

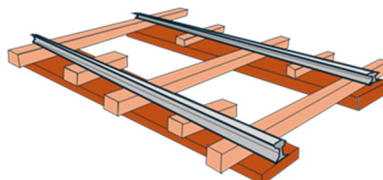
Wood Ties and Flat Bottom T-rails used for about 2 mile near Rumford

**Permanent Style 3**

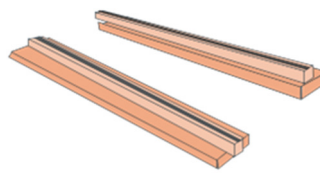
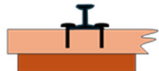
Stone rails and strap Iron Rails Used for about ¼ mile near Robbinsville

**Permanent Style 4**

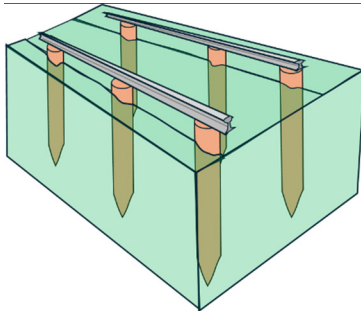
Wood Ties, Wood planks, and Flat Bottom Rails
Used on top of wooden trestle over Crosswicks Creek located 3 miles east of Bordentown
Designed for horse pulled trains to cross the trestle



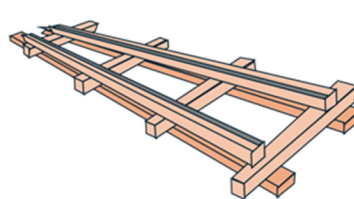
Permanent Style 5 Wood planks topped by wood cross ties and wood short beams, topped by flat-bottom iron rails used for about 30 miles)



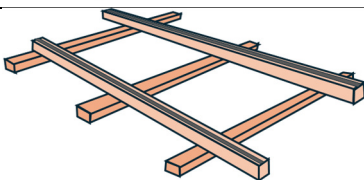
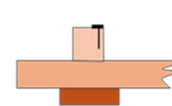
Permanent Style 6 Wood planks topped by wood rails and strap rails (used for 0.9 mile)



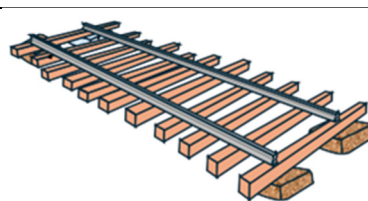
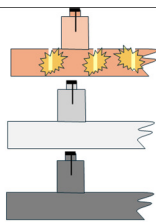
Permanent Style 7 7 ft cedar posts driven into west land, set at 3.2 ft, topped by flat bottom iron rails (used for short section and in Burlington City)



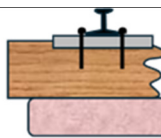
Permanent Style 8: Wood ground boards topped by strap iron rails



Permanent Style 9, 10 and 11: Wood ground boards topped by wood rails, laths, and strap iron rails. Wood preserved by three salting, liming, and charring



Permanent Style 12: Stone sleepers installed at the end of each rail, 16 ft. rail supported by 11 wood cross ties that support rail plate and flat bottom rail. Intermediate rails supported on wood rail only



CAMDEN & AMBOY RAILROAD

STONE SLEEPERS

During 1831-32, Camden & Amboy Railroad laid down about 100,000 stone sleepers for the 31 miles from Bordertown Wharf to South Amboy Wharf.

In October 1830, Edwin Stevens placed advertisements for stone sleepers in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and *New York Post*. He received bids from local quarries in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, New York, and New England. The least costly stones were 33 ½ cents per stone delivered to the Bordertown Wharf and 44 ½ cents per stone delivered to the South Amboy Wharf.

Stone was used because wood rotted too easily, and cressote and other wood preservatives were not yet invented. Stone sleeper types include 2-holes and 4-holes for flat bottom rails; 2-holes for wood rails, and stone rails for strap iron.

The stones here include red sandstone, grey gneiss, banded gneiss, garnet gneiss, white marble, gabbro, diabase, and pebbly conglomerate. Most sandstone was likely quarried near Scudders Falls in Mercer County. The various gneisses were quarried in Bucks County, Pa. and along the Hudson River in Westchester County, N.Y. Marble was quarried by prisoners from the four quarries at Sing Sing (Ossining) Prison. Gabbro was quarried in Trenton. Diabase was likely quarried in the Sourland Mountains and the Palisades along the Hudson. Conglomerate was quarried in the Clarksburg Mountains in Monmouth County and from other hilltop areas of the New Jersey Coastal Plain. Granite was quarried near Rockport, Mass. and elsewhere in coastal New England.

236 words

Kiosk 3
Light Rail Lot
DK JB KP PS

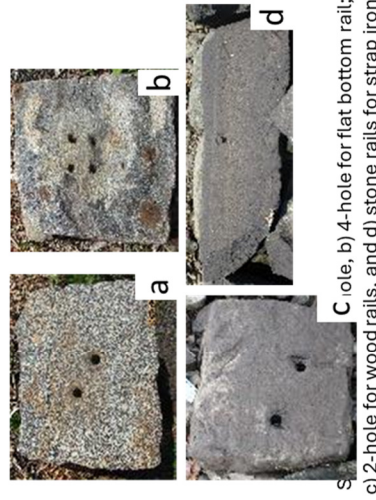
STONE WANTED

PROPOSALS will be received by the Camden and Amboy Rail Road Company, at the office of the Engineer, at Camden, N. J., 2,000 at Bordertown, N. J., and 25,000 at Crosswick's Creek Bridge, N. J. The blocks may vary in shape—if square, to be not less than 12 inches, or more than 21 inches, and from 10 to 13 inches deep; if oblong, to be not more than 23 inches long, nor less than 14 inches wide, and from 10 to 13 inches deep; 12 inches of the upper side to be faced across the stone. It is necessary that the bottom of the stone be parallel, or nearly so, with the top; the other sides are not required to be parallel. Also, 50,000 blocks, similar to the above, excepting the depth, which is not to be less than 7 inches. Also, 30,000 running feet of stone rail, 12 inches square, each rail not to be less than 5 feet long; they may vary in shape, but not to be less than 10 inches by 12, nor more than 14 inches by 16; the ends to be squared, and the top to be faced to an edge 2 inches wide from the iron on, and the side to an edge 2 inches wide from the same edge down. To be dealt in the same proportion as the above. Quarries will not be made for less than 2,000 blocks, or 8,000 feet of rail; one half to be delivered by the first of January, and the remainder by the first of April next. Payment to be of such a quantity as to resist the action of frost and water.

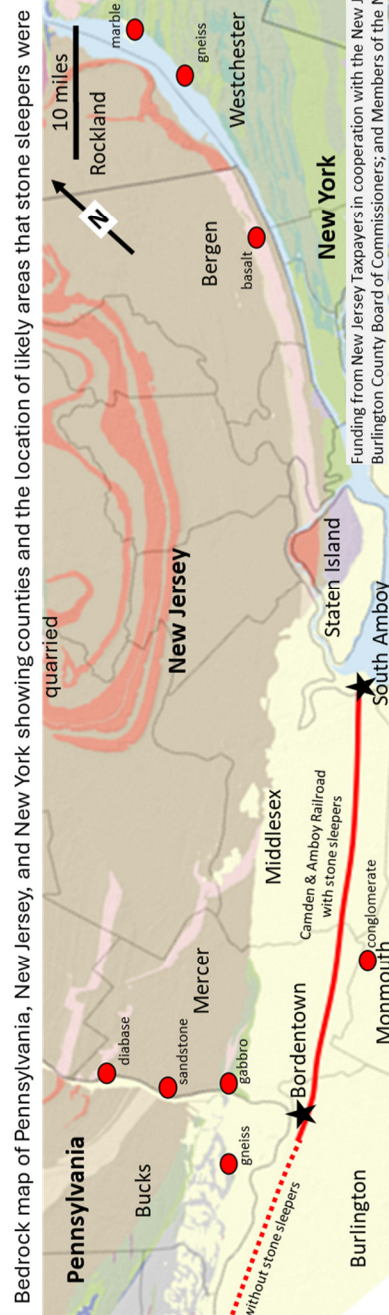
E. A. STEVENS,
Proprietor, to be directed to the subdivider, Union Line Office, foot of Chestnut street, Philadelphia, Oct 21, 1830

Newspaper advertisement to receive bids for

stone sleepers



c) 2-hole for wood rails, and d) stone rails for strap iron.



Funding from New Jersey Taxpayers in cooperation with the New Jersey Historical Commission, Department of State, by a grant from the Burlington County Board of Commissioners; and Members of the National Railway Historical Society through NRHS Heritage Grants.

Figure 5. One of 14 information kiosks prepared for the self-guided walking tour of the Camden & Amboy Railroad Historic District in Bordertown, NJ.

Figure 5 .

Support NRHS with a Qualified Charitable Distribution from Your IRA

By *ROBERT ERNST, NRHS Fund President, National Railway Historical Society*

Satisfy your required minimum distribution while helping preserve railway heritage.

A Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) is a distribution of funds from your IRA (other than a SEP or SIMPLE IRA) directly to a qualified charitable organization, such as the NRHS Fund, Inc. Because the gift goes directly to the charity without passing through your hands, the dollar amount of the gift may be excluded from your taxable income up to a maximum of \$108,000 annually, with some exceptions. Please consult your tax advisor for information regarding your specific exceptions.

If you are 70 ½ years or older and have a traditional IRA, you are eligible to make a tax-free donation directly from your IRA to the NRHS Fund, Inc. as a Qualified Charitable Distribution.

For those aged 73 and older, Qualified Charitable Distributions can count towards your required minimum distribution, allowing you to use your IRA to support railway preservation today, tomorrow, and for generations to come.

Benefits

It's a tax-efficient way to make an impact. Because the distribution is not taxable income, it is an effective charitable deduction.

You can direct your donation to a specific program of the NRHS; Heritage Grants, RailCamp, Film Preservation, or fund the operation of the NRHS through an unrestricted donation.

The distribution can count towards your annual required minimum distribution (RMD) for those 73 and older.

It's a special opportunity for individuals aged 70½ and older to give up to \$108,000* annually.

How It Works

Notify your IRA custodian to make a **direct transfer** of the gift amount from your IRA to the NRHS Fund, Inc. EIN: 46-5395491

Please **mail QCD checks** to:

NRHS Fund, Inc.
505 South Lenola Road
Suite 226
Moorestown, N.J. 08057

Please note: **We need your name and address to accompany the check** to correctly credit and acknowledge your gift.

A written acknowledgement will come from the NRHS Fund Inc. (different from a tax deduction receipt) to verify your donation was received.

Your Email Address is Important

By *MIKE YUHAS, Membership Committee, NRHS*

NRHS uses email to communicate with members about...

- Membership
- Upcoming conferences, conventions, and other events
- The availability of NRHS News online editions
- NRHS programs

Additionally, NRHS provides timely acknowledgements of donations via email.

If it's been a while since you've received an email from NRHS on any of these topics, it's likely because we do not have your email address on file. If that's the case, won't you please keep us up to date? Just send an email to membership@nrhs.com to let us know. Please include your NRHS member number (if it's handy) or your ZIP code.

Trains are Everywhere if you look!

Text and photos courtesy of EILEEN WEBER, St. Louis Chapter, NRHS

In January, Al and I went for a cruise to Antarctica – the seventh continent to visit. Then of course, we needed to see the “Train at the End of the World” in Ushuaia, Argentina. This 60-centimeter gauge steam train was built in the early 1900s by prisoners to move building materials to build the prisons. It is currently a tourist train, running daily excursions from the Ushuaia station to the Tierra del Fuego National Park. There are currently three steam engines running.



Entrance to the train building.



Station sign, with passenger car behind.



Engine backing up to attach to its train.



Train heading out on its run, while another hooks up before starting its run.

Of course, after being in Antarctica in January (their southern summer), we needed to go to Alaska during the northern summer. And we found that the cruise terminal at Seward is about a half mile from the current Alaska Railroad station. There are daily trains between Anchorage and Seward. And the original station (on Railroad Street) is now a restaurant and gift shop.



Part of the Alaska Railroad consist for the nightly run to Anchorage.



Secretary of the Interior John Barton Payne, Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels, and Rear-Admiral Hugh Rodman arrive at Seward on an inspection trip of the Government Railroad and coal fields. July 15/1920.
 As Alaska Engineering Commission photo. Photographer's number G1374. Photographer: H.G.K.

July 15, 1920, inspection trip by Secretary of the Interior John Barton Payne, Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels and Rear-Admiral Hugh Rodman.



Original Seward depot, now a restaurant and gift shop.

ANNOUNCEMENTS / EVENTS

OPERATION TOY TRAIN– November 15 through December 14, 2025



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, July 4, 2025

Press Contact: Rudy Garbely, rgarbely@operationtoytrain.org, 973-800-9251 (cell)

Please note: a press kit (featuring graphics and photos) is available on our website at www.OperationToyTrain.org/press

* * *

Operation Toy Train Expands to 69 Towns Across Five States for 2025 Holiday Toy Drive

PORT JERVIS, NY — Operation Toy Train is proud to announce its largest and most expansive schedule yet for the 2025 season. This annual project of the non-profit organization TOYX, Inc. is dedicated to running special trains throughout the United States that collect and deliver donated toys to the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots Foundation. With collection events planned in 69 towns across five states, Operation Toy Train will roll into communities from California to Connecticut throughout November and December.

The 2025 collection train season begins the weekend of November 15 and concludes December 14, featuring several new stops along the way. From small towns in rural Pennsylvania and upstate New York to the bustling suburban sprawl in northern New Jersey and southern California, the train stops in the centers of local communities, where residents are invited to visit the train and its crew, donate new unwrapped toys, and meet Santa Claus in person.

"This year's schedule represents the most ambitious expansion of Operation Toy Train in our 17-year history," said Carolyn Hoffman, president of TOYX. "We're excited to welcome new communities aboard and continue spreading holiday joy to children and families in need."

New operations in 2025 include the Northern Division of the New York, Susquehanna & Western Railway in central New York State and the East Penn Railroad in southeastern Pennsylvania. Operation Toy Train has released its list of dates and locations today; a complete and finalized schedule, including exact times, locations, and event details, will be released in October.

The trains are staffed entirely by volunteers and are made possible through partnerships with ten railroads and numerous community organizations. Each stop transforms into a holiday celebration complete with historic railcars, photo opportunities with Santa, and a powerful reminder of the season's spirit of giving. All donated toys support local chapters of the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots program and stay local in the communities where they are collected.

To view the 2025 schedule and learn how to get involved — either as a volunteer, sponsor, or donor — visit www.OperationToyTrain.org.

* * *

Operation Toy Train runs a series of special annual toy collection trains across the United States during the holiday season. Each year, the trains collect over 40,000 donated toys for the Marine Toys for Tots Foundation and other local civic organizations, all of which redistribute the toys to underprivileged children within the collection areas. Operation Toy Train is a project of TOYX, Inc., a New York 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. For more information, please visit www.OperationToyTrain.org.

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