

## Railroad Day on the Hill 2026

By AL WEBER, St. Louis Chapter NRHS. (Photo courtesy of Michael Carpenter.)



*Railroad Day on the Hill attendees before the meeting with Senator Mark Kelley's staff member.*

On Wednesday March 4, I attended Railroad Day on the Hill 2026 sponsored by American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association (ASLRRA). ASLRRA sets up sessions with members of Congress for short 15-minute face-to-face meetings. I usually have meetings with four Senators and four Representatives, but it varies from year by year.

This year I met with Senator Eric Schmitt and Representative Bob Onder in person. The rest of the meetings were with staff members from various areas around the country, Senators Mark Kelley, Jerry Moran and John Curtis, as well as Representatives Juan Ciscomani, Wesley Bell, Lateefah Simon and Ted Lieu. I also briefly visited some of those with whom I have had meetings. This year, due to both houses in session, time with Senators and Representatives was very limited.

Over the years I have attended this annual event, I have come to know some of the Senators' and Representatives' staff and visited with them in addition to my assigned visits. At each of these meetings, I also drop off literature, including the NRHS Bulletin, NRHS brochure and a RailCamp brochure, along with contact information. In all, a very good set of meetings with Congress.

# MARCH 2026

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## Submission Deadlines for NRHS News

- April 2026 (online PDF) – deadline April 10, 2026
- May 2026 (online PDF) – deadline April 20, 2026

## NRHS Events, Conventions, Conferences

### ***NRHS Spring Conference - Salt Lake City, Utah. May 28 to 30, 2026***

- See Conference Announcement on p. 3.

## 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. On occasion, a “special” issue might be published. All issues are available (pdf file) online at <https://admin.nrhs.com/NRHSNews/>

Valli Hoski, Harrisburg Chapter NRHS, Editor. Elizabeth Guenzler, Central Coast Chapter NRHS, Associate Editor. Alex Mayes, Potomac Chapter NRHS, Content Assistant. Eileen Weber, St. Louis Chapter NRHS, Editorial Assistant. Email submissions to [News@nrhs.com](mailto: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 Doug Scott at [Membership@nrhs.com](mailto:Membership@nrhs.com). Membership dues should be mailed to NRHS - Membership, PO Box 31074, St. Louis, MO 63131-0074 or you may join or renew online at [www.NRHS.com/membership](http://www.NRHS.com/membership).

## Spring 2026 NRHS Conference: May 28 - May 30, 2026

The Spring 2026 NRHS Conference takes place in Salt Lake City, Utah, in late May. The Promontory Chapter, our host, has arranged a full weekend, including a tour of Ogden Union Station and an excursion on the Heber Valley Railroad. And of course, NRHS business meetings!



***A Heber Valley Railroad passenger car.***

Conference timetable:

- Registration welcome center opens Thursday, May 28, 4:00 pm, in the Cheyenne room of the Little America Hotel, 500 South Main Street, Salt Lake City.
- Friday, May 29: Our deluxe chartered motor coach leaves the hotel bright and early for a fun day of railroad activity. The journey starts with a tour of Ogden Union Station. Locomotives on display include Union Pacific gas turbine electric 26, UP DDA40X 6916, and the chapter's D&RGW SW-1200 133.
- In the afternoon we ride on the Heber Valley Railroad to the end of the line and return. A box lunch is served on the train, with choice of ham, turkey, roast beef or vegetarian sandwiches, or a lettuce wrap.
- Saturday, May 30: Advisory Council and Board of Directors meetings.
- 2026 is the 60th anniversary of the Promontory Chapter! Conference attendees will join the celebration by attending the chapter's buffet-style banquet on-site at the hotel's Idaho room featuring prime rib, chicken and fish.

The Conference fee is \$250 for the full weekend, or \$25 for members who wish to only attend the Saturday meetings in person.

Registration for the full weekend is open through May 20. To register, please see the Spring Conference notice that was emailed to each member on February 22nd.

Conference headquarters is the Little America Hotel, 500 South Main Street, Salt Lake City. Our group rate is \$139 per night, plus taxes. Please note hotel space is limited, so book early to avoid disappointment.

To book a hotel reservation, please see the Spring Conference notice that was emailed to each member on February 22<sup>nd</sup>. Click on the information link (there will be additional emails before the deadline). Or log in to your membership portal at <https://secure.nrhs.com> and click the conference link.

We're looking forward to seeing you in May!

Cordially, Promontory Chapter and the NRHS Conference Team

### ***On the horizon***

The NRHS 2026 Convention will take place in Ohio in late September. Details to follow.

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## Cosmetic Restoration of Locomotive That Pulled the "American Freedom Train" (AFT)

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*By ALEX MAYES and Photo courtesy of TERESA RENNER, Potomac Chapter NRHS.*

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In the early 1970s, the late Ross Rowland Jr., a successful New York commodities broker and steam locomotive enthusiast, and occasional steam locomotive engineer, envisioned a plan to celebrate the nation's 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary. His idea was to assemble a train filled with iconic American artifacts such as George Washington's copy of the Constitution, Dr. Martin L. King Jr's robes, the Louisiana Purchase, Benjamin Franklin's handwritten draft of the Articles of Confederation, Judy Garland's dress from "The Wizard of Oz" and hundreds of other significant artifacts. This train was to travel to all 48 contiguous states and stop at several cities for people to walk through and view the items on display. This train was to be named the "American Freedom Train" (AFT).

During the early stages of the planning some organizers wanted the AFT to be pulled by diesels, however Ross and a few of his associates knew from previous experiences with major steam-powered special trains, such as the "Golden Spike Centennial Limited" in 1969, powered by ex-Nickel Plate Berkshire No. 759, were a huge success due to their being powered by steam. An agreement was finally reached to have the AFT powered by steam locomotives. However, there was barely enough time to build the 26-car train or find or restore a suitable steam locomotive.

After an exhaustive search, two former Reading Company 4-8-4s, Nos. 2100 and 2101, were found at Striegel Supply and Equipment Corporation in Baltimore, a major railroad equipment recycling company. These two locomotives were designed to power long coal and freight trains. Following their revenue service on the Reading, both locomotives powered the legendary "Iron Horse Rambles" excursions and were later sold to the scrap company where they sat for ten years.

Both locomotives were purchased by Ross in 1975 and the 2101 was selected for use on his upcoming American Freedom Train. Ross named the 2101 "AFT 1". Remarkably, a thorough restoration of the 2101 back to running condition was completed in just 30 days.

The AFT made its first tour on April 1, 1975, starting in Wilmington, Delaware and proceeding northeast to New England. AFT 1 pulled the American Freedom Train throughout the northeastern region of the country from 1975 to 1976. Two other steam engines had that honor over the rest of the United States - Southern Pacific 4-8-4 No. 4449 painted in a special red, white and blue livery, and former Texas & Pacific 2-10-4 No. 610.

After its stint with the AFT, No. 2101 was repainted into a bright yellow-and-orange livery and pulled many excursions arranged by Ross Rowland on the Chessie System as the "Chessie Steam Special" to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad.

On March 6, 1979, No. 2101 was damaged in a roundhouse fire in Russell, Kentucky, which was caused by an electrical issue in the building. After inspections revealed the repair cost was prohibitive, it was repainted into its AFT scheme and placed on outdoor display at the B&O Railroad Museum in Baltimore.



***B&O ROUNDHOUSE*** - This is the main entrance to the museum, which leads to the roundhouse and turntable, seen in the distance. Undoubtedly the most spectacular and best-known of the museum's buildings is the roundhouse, which is a National Historic Landmark. The roundhouse was built to service and pair passenger cars and replaced a similar shop destroyed by fire in February 1883.

With the nation's upcoming 250th anniversary occurring this year, and the 200th anniversary of the B&O Railroad's founding next year, museum officials decided that the cosmetic restoration of AFT 1 was necessary since it is one of the most significant locomotives in its collection and it was badly deteriorated. Exposure to the elements for 37 years caused extensive paint loss and discoloration, and corrosion of the exterior metal jacking.



***AFT 1 IN B&O ROUNDHOUSE – Newly-restored AFT 1 in Bay 10.***

Following the completion of a six-month cosmetic restoration, AFT 1 was unveiled to museum officials, donors, museum employees and volunteers and the press in a special ceremony at the B&O Railroad Museum in Baltimore, Maryland on January 12, 2026.

This ceremony began at 11:00, and the museum opened to the public at 1:00. Teresa and I felt honored to be able to attend the special ceremony for the unveiling.



***UNVEILING OF AFT 1 COSMETIC RESTORATION - B&O Railroad Museum Executive Director Kris Hoellen delivers opening comments at the beginning of the unveiling event to celebrate the cosmetic restoration of American Freedom Train locomotive AFT 1 on January 12, 2026.***



***THANKS TO ALL WHO CONTRIBUTED TO AFT 1's RESTORATION - Former Maryland governor Martin thanked all who took part in AFT 1's restoration and praised the museum for its dedication to railroading history .***



***RIBBON-CUTTING FOR AMERICAN FREEDOM TRAIN (AFT) - The unveiling ceremony concluded with a ceremonial ribbon cutting which included B&O Railroad Museum Executive Director Kris Hoellen (red scarf), former Maryland Governor Honorable Martin O'Malley, Bruno Maestra, Amtrak Vice President of Government Affairs and Corporate Communications and B&O Railroad Museum Board Member and others.***



***ARTWORK RESTORED - The restoration of the iconic bald eagle and other artwork on the tender was hand painted by noted artists David and Line Tutwiler before clear coats were applied. David has had a relationship with the American Freedom Train. This photo was taken prior to the unveiling ceremony in the roundhouse.***

AFT1 is on display for public viewing at the B&O Railroad Museum in Baltimore. For information, visit the museum's website at: <https://www.borail.org/>

# Service Break for the 4-8-4 Chessie Steam Special

By ALEX MAYES, Potomac Chapter NRHS (Photo courtesy of Alex Mayes)



**TAKING A COAL AND WATER BREAK - Former Reading Company T1 No. 2101 takes on coal and water at a service stop in Martinsburg, West Virginia.**

On October 1, 1977, the huge 4-8-4 powered the Chessie Steam Special from Baltimore to Harpers Ferry, West Virginia and returned the same day.

After dropping off passengers at Harpers Ferry, the train continued west on the former B&O main to Martinsburg for service and turning on the former Pennsylvania Railroad line to Winchester, Virginia.

This trip was sponsored by the Washington DC and Potomac Chapters of the NRHS and the Chesapeake Division of the Railroad Enthusiasts, known as the Joint Trip Committee.

**Editor's note:** For more history of the Chessie Steam Special Era please see [https://locomotive.fandom.com/wiki/Reading\\_No.\\_2101](https://locomotive.fandom.com/wiki/Reading_No._2101).



***CHESSIE STEAM SPECIAL CROSSING THE HISTORIC THOMAS VIADUCT - After its stint with the AFT, No. 2101 was repainted into a bright yellow-and-orange livery and pulled many excursions. This photo was taken as the Chessie Steam Special roared across historic Thomas Viaduct on B&O's Washington Subdivision west of Baltimore, MD on May 6, 1978.***

Many of the excursions were arranged by Ross Rowland on the Chessie System as the "Chessie Steam Special" to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. Starting with the first trip on May 7, 1977, the 2101 pulled trains across the entire Chessie rail network.



## FP7s with Vintage Livery - Leased for Virginia Excursion

By ALEX MAYES, Potomac Chapter NRHS (Photo courtesy of Alex Mayes)



**VINTAGE GREEN AND WHITE SOUTHERN RAILWAY FP7s – Leased equipment for the round-trip excursion from Alexandria to Shenandoah, Virginia.**

With former Southern Railway 2-8-2 No. 4501 suffering a cracked front sheet and former Chesapeake & Ohio 2-8-4 No. 2716 undergoing restoration, Southern Railway had no operable steam engines of their own for the 1981 trips out of Alexandria, Virginia.

As a result, Southern Railway leased former Canadian Pacific 4-6-2 No. 1238 from the Alleghany Central Railroad to manage some of the trips, and the other trips were powered by vintage green and white Southern Railway FP7s. One such trip with the FP7s was on June 28, 1981, which was a round-trip excursion from Alexandria to Shenandoah, Virginia.

One photo runby was held on the Manassas Gap Branch at Belvoir, enroute to Shenandoah. In this photo we see FP7s Nos. 6138 and 6143 passing the huge group of photographers as the train reverses for the first runby.

This excursion was sponsored by the Potomac and Washington DC Chapters NRHS, and the Chesapeake Division of the Railroad Enthusiasts, known as the Joint Trip Committee.

## Chapter Events and Activities

### *The Doswell Special – April 26, 2026*



WASHINGTON DC CHAPTER  
National Railway Historical Society

#### Trip News: March 2026



### The Doswell Special

**Special train from Louisa VA to Doswell VA to Gordonsville VA and returning to Louisa VA over the Buckingham Branch RR.**

Sunday, April 26, 2026

*Depart Louisa VA 10:00 a.m.; return to Louisa VA by 4:00 p.m.*

Enjoy a springtime journey on a special, rare-mileage **Virginia Scenic Railway train** departing from **Louisa, Virginia** traveling over approximately fifty miles of the former Chesapeake & Ohio Railway between **Doswell** and **Gordonsville** through the quaint towns and scenic countryside of Central Virginia. A delicious lunch is included and will be served aboard the train while enroute.



DCNRHS is sponsoring this one-time rare mileage special train which will operate over a route not offered as part of Virginia Scenic Railway's publicly available trips. This line last saw regular passenger service with Amtrak's *James Whitcomb Riley*, Newport News Section which was discontinued on June 14, 1976. After that, a few *Chessie Steam Special* excursion trains operated the line in the 1970s and early 1980s. Full details on this special train are available in our [trip flier](#). **Capacity is limited so make your reservation soon so you don't miss out!**

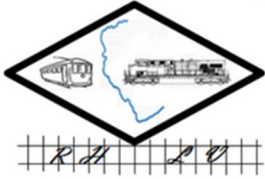
**[Click here to reserve your space.](#) The fare for this one-day special train is \$269 for DCNRHS members and \$299 for nonmembers.**

**The Railroad Explorer VI – Saturday, April 18, 2026**

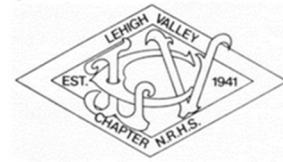
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-ANNOUNCES-

**The RAILROAD EXPLORER VI**  
**A Railfan R.D.C. Branchline Excursion**  
**SATURDAY, APRIL 18, 2026**

Ride the Reading & Northern's RDCs starting at The Nesquehoning Regional Railroad Station. Travel past Lake Hauto and over the Hometown High Bridge on the Reading Division Main Line. Branching off at Carbon Junction experience rare mileage along the Hazleton Branch to Oneida Junction. More rare mileage awaits on the return trip exploring the Delano Running Track and the Morea Running Track all the way to the end of the line at Skytop! This scenic journey will include several photo stops and run-bys as well as a tour of the Nesquehoning Campus upon return.

*\* The Railroad reserves the right to substitute motive power.*

**Boarding begins at 8:30. Train Departs Nesquehoning promptly at 9:00**

Nesquehoning GPS Address is: 1 Iron Horse Way, Nesquehoning, PA 18240

- A route map will be provided -

**Your choice of Turkey, Italian, or Ham Hoagie \***  
**Please list your choices on the Ticket order form, below.**

SNACKS, SODA, & WATER WILL BE AVAILABLE ALL DAY AT AN ADDITIONAL COST - SOLD BY THE RAILROAD



**All are welcome, membership not required!**

**FARE: \$ 99.00/per Rider**

*Includes train charter over rare mileage, limited seating, photo-stops, run-bys, and lunch.*

**PLEASE RESERVE BEFORE APRIL 1, 2026**

Information or questions– KGJR1554@earthlink.net

Mail checks to: Kermit Geary Jr, 1266 Riverview Drive, Walnutport PA 18088

Make checks payable to: Lehigh Valley Chapter- N.R.H.S.

**\* ALL Tickets will be held for pickup the day of the Trip . \***



clip

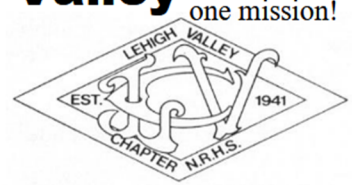
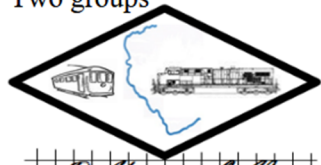
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ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP CODE: \_\_\_\_\_

AMOUNT ENCLOSED: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ .00 TELEPHONE: ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

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 &  
**Lehigh Valley Chapter, NRHS**



Dedicated to preserving the Lehigh Valley region's rich railroading history for the future.

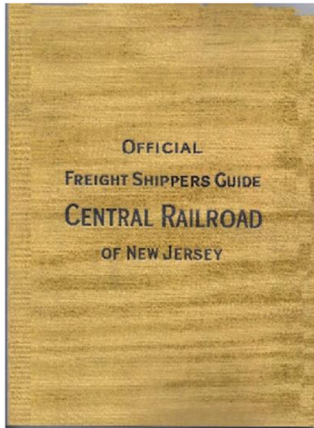
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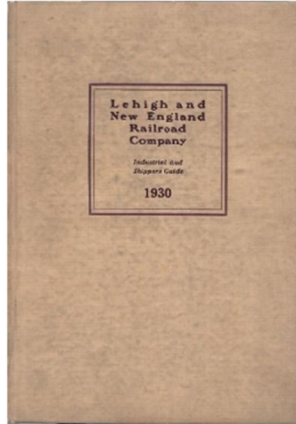


CNJ 1918



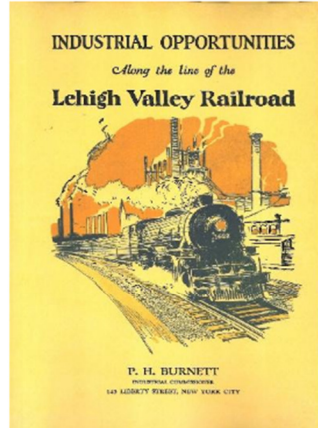
Member: @ \$30  
 Public: @ \$40

LNE 1930



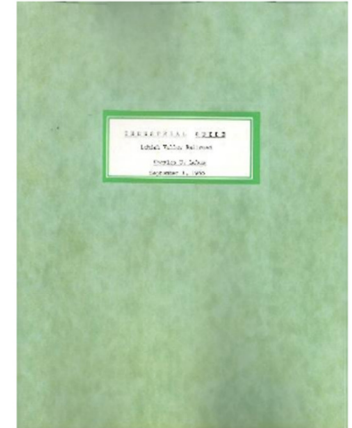
Member: @ \$30  
 Public: @ \$40

LV 1926

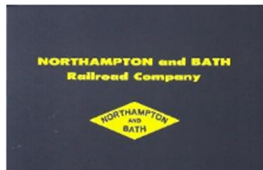


Member: @ \$25  
 Public: @ \$35

LV 1965



Member: @ \$15  
 Public: @ \$25



Member: @ \$8  
 Public: @ \$10

Take a step back in time to an age when railroads actively advertised their services and took pride in their shippers. Key features of most books are descriptive directories of shippers, fold-out maps of port facilities, concise lists of all shippers located at every station, geographic descriptions of primary towns and boroughs along the railroad, period photographs and advertisements, and more. Whether a modeler or scholar, these books are a must for rail enthusiasts. All items have been painstakingly reproduced in their entirety. The books retain their as-delivered appearance and format. All reproductions are perfect-bound and printed on high quality paper. Additionally, the 16-page N&B pamphlet was produced by the railroad in 1955. It contains a map, a history of the railroad, and descriptions of the towns located along their mainline. *Please note, member rates apply only to those who have active membership with RHLV.* Join today to receive member rates!

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Book Subtotal \$ \_\_\_\_\_ + Shipping (\$10 single book, \$15 multiple books) = Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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Send checks made payable to Lehigh Valley Chapter, NRHS to Jim Rowland PO Box 397 Cobb Island, MD 20625