

Riding on the Pennsylvania Railroad

**A collection of railroad travel stories as told by
Roger E. Shaffer**

Taking a Ride on the Pennsylvania's Baltimore Division

Roger E. Shaffer - 2000

A train ride on the route of the Northern Central Railway Company tracks would certainly have been an interesting one. The only thing this writer knows of the Northern Central is that there was such a railroad and that his Dad's railroad experience began as an employee of the Northern Central. Family records indicate that Dad began his employment on September 30, 1907.

Historically speaking, the Northern Central was incorporated on Dec. 4 1854, as the consolidation of four other short line roads of the area. The aim of the supporters of this railroad was to reach the anthracite coal fields of Pennsylvania since the line to Sunbury would put these mines much closer by rail to Baltimore than by any existing route. Furthermore, high hopes were held for local travel, and for tourist travel to Niagara Falls.

One of the early supporters, and later director of the company was Simon Cameron, who served on President Lincoln's Cabinet as Secretary of War.

The original line from Baltimore to York was completed in 1838, and the line from York to Harrisburg was finished in 1851. The effective date for formal acquisition of the Northern Central Railway by the Pennsylvania Railroad was January 1, 1911.

We now come to the era that I remember, when the line from Baltimore to Harrisburg was known as the Pennsylvania Railroad's Baltimore-Division. Since this trip does not have a specific date, lets say it was 1925 - a time that I remember well.

Ours being a railroad family, we depended, to a large degree, on the trains for basic transportation. I enjoyed numerous train trips to Baltimore. One primary reason for going to Baltimore was to visit with other family members - the McCleary's, Dad's cousin and a step-sister of my Mother and her family. Usually it was a one-day trip. We would board train No.992, due to leave Hanover Jct. at 9:19 A.M. Those were the days when trains ran on time. A train's time at a specific place was specified by the timetable. If it was very late, it was because of some event beyond anyone's control. No. 992 was a regularly scheduled mail-carrying Local Accommodation train.

The Local Accommodation trains were made up of an engine and three cars:

1. Engine, type K-4, which had a 4-6-2 wheel arrangement
2. Combination Post Office and Baggage Compartment car (the mail section was next to the locomotive)
3. Passenger coach (type P-70), smoking allowed
4. Passenger coach (type P-70), no smoking

No. 992's arrival at Baltimore Union Station was 11:20 A.M. - on time. Up the steps, through the waiting room, and out on to Charles Street we went. Trolley service was available for us to use. Sometimes we would walk up to North Avenue and board a trolley there, depending on our destination at that time.

After our visit with relatives, we returned to Union Station. The station was built in 1911, and is now known as Pennsylvania Station, on Charles Street. Before boarding the train for our return trip home, if time was available, I always wanted to visit the area used by Western Maryland trains in Union Station.

Then back we went to the main waiting room. The waiting room was typical of major city railroad stations: high ceilings, high-back benches, restaurant, ticket office, and a baggage checking area. What could be more exciting, especially to a kid like myself who was accustomed to a small railroad station waiting room with a pot-belly stove in the middle of the room and a single kerosene lighted lamp hanging from the ceiling to provide illumination at night?

Time for boarding our train drew near, so out to the boarding area we went. The entry gates were located in an area which extended above and over the tracks which were used by arriving and departing trains. We looked for the gate sign indicating the departure of the HARRISBURG ACCOMMODATION. This was usually at the far end of the corridor, an area used mainly for the Harrisburg and the Parkton locals. These tracks were more convenient for north- and west-bound trains leaving the station. Our train, No. 995, was scheduled to leave at 6:15 P.M. and arrive at Hanover Jct. at 8:07 P.M.

The Parkton Local was a very popular train, as it provided frequent and dependable service for commuting passengers. The train would leave Baltimore, go north to Parkton, a distance of 28.8 miles, and then return to Baltimore.

When we got to train-side, we might find Conductor Allen Wherley standing there. Dad greeted him as "Captain". Why this greeting? This title was a carry-over from Civil War days, when all railroad conductors held the rating of CAPTAIN. This title was used many times by railroad people. Incidentally, Conductor Wherley was one of my many railroad idols, and a good friend for as long as he lived.

Leaving Union Station, right on time, through the interlocking on the tracks heading north. To the left could be seen the entrance to the B. & P. tunnel (Baltimore and Potomac R.R.). This tunnel is double track, 1.4 miles long, built originally to enable connection of the Baltimore & Potomac with the Northern Central. Today it carries Northeast Corridor AMTRAK trains between Washington and Boston.

Shortly, on the right, passengers would observe the yard facilities of the Maryland & Pennsylvania Railroad. This railroad has always been affectionately referred to as the MA & PA. The Maryland & Pennsylvania traveled 77.2 miles to reach York Pa., while the Pennsylvania made the same destination in 56.2 miles.

A bit of detail of the Ma & Pa trackage. The railroad's Engineering Department computed that the line had 476 curves in its length of 77.2 miles, which was a record. The curves totaled 192,261 feet, about 47% of the road's mileage. Of these curves, 100 were sharper than 14 degrees, and 55 were greater than 16 degrees.¹ By comparison, the Denver and Rio Grande

¹ Curvatures are expressed in degrees, minutes, and seconds. A curve is a part of a circle. The sharper the curve, the smaller the circle and the shorter the radius.

Western has no curve on its main line exceeding 12 degrees. The Ma & Pa's worst curve is 20 degrees. This line may have been called the "Route of the Screaming Flanges."

Leaving the Baltimore area, we see station names Woodbury, Melvale, Mt. Washington, Bare Hills, and Hollins. At Hollins, bearing off to the left we see the beginning of the Green Spring Branch. Hollins to Green Spring Junction on the Western Maryland ran for a distance of 8.6 miles.

Then on to Ruxton, Riderwood, Lutherville, Timonium. Looking to the right we saw the site of the Timonium State Fair Ground - a very popular fair for many people.

Continuing on to Texas, Cockeysville, Ashland, Phoenix, Sparks, Glencoe, Corbett, Blue Mount, White Hall, Greystone, and then Parkton. Parkton was the terminus of the Parkton Local trains, as they were known. From here, these commuter trains returned to Baltimore. Can you just imagine how busy the firemen on those steam locomotives must have been hand-firing a K-4 while making these many stops and starts? On our trip to Parkton, we've made 18/20 stops, and traveled only 27.8 miles. Parkton was also the beginning of the steepest part of the grade of the Division going north, reaching the summit at a point just south of the New Freedom Station.

After leaving Parkton, we noted Walker, Bentley Springs, and Freeland. Immediately before reaching the summit, we crossed the Mason & Dixon Line, leaving Maryland and entering Pennsylvania. On the left we would see a very popular summer retreat known as the Summit Camp Meeting Grounds. Now, beginning to head down grade, we paused at the New Freedom Station, noting on the right the Stewartstown Railroad. This train made a connection with our train in order to take exchanging passengers to Stewartstown. Just after leaving the New Freedom station was a wye track on the right. This served both the Stewartstown and the Pennsylvania as a place for turning of locomotives. After assisting a freight train up the grade from Hanover Jct., the engine would be turned on the wye and return to either Hanover Junction or York, as needed.

Departing New Freedom, the tracks are headed directly north, but the employee's time-table indicates the train as westbound. Therefore, all trains on the division were either eastbound or westbound. The next station stops were Shrewsbury, Seitzland, and Glen Rock.

Glen Rock requires a bit of digression, for it was here that I was born, loved to spend time with my grandparents, and later graduated from Glen Rock High School, Class 1933. Living at Hanover Jct., it was too far to walk to Glen Rock, so train service was my answer for commuting to High School. The Milk Train, No. 8020 in the morning, and No. 993 in the evening, did the trick.

After the train left Glen Rock, we passed the village of Centerville, the site of the Centerville train wreck, which occurred on Good Friday, 1920. The exact location can be noted on the road embankment on the left of the train. It was here that the two engines of eastbound train No. 544 left the rails, and plowed into the embankment. The train was scheduled to pass Hanover Junction at 4:54 P.M., and make a stop at Glen Rock at 5:01 P.M. Engineer of the lead engine, William DeHuff, was killed, and Charles Wilson of the second engine was injured. There were several other injuries listed, but no other fatalities. A memory associated with this wreck comes

to mind. A family habit was to go to Glen Rock on Friday evenings on Train No. 994, leaving Hanover Jct. at 5:38 P.M., to do some grocery shopping at the A&P. We would return home at 8:07 P.M. on 995. However, this particular Friday evening there was no shopping trip to Glen Rock. Then this question arises: Why not use the auto? Answer: There was none.

The next and last station stop on our return home from Baltimore before Hanover Jct. was the village of Larue. Here again, a bit of digression. Just a short distance north of the village was a farm on the right side of the tracks, and the home of a particular farm girl who in later life became my wife.

Shortly after passing this farmstead, we passed the village of Seitzville, and then the Hanover Jct. Coal Yard. This was a busy little place, supplying the steam locomotives with coal, water, and sand, and use of the ash pit if needed. Water was pumped from the nearby Codorus Creek, and stored in a large reservoir well above track level, so that the water could flow by gravity to a waiting engine that needed a drink.

Less than one mile more, and the engineer would sound one long toot of his whistle, an indication that he was going to make another station stop, namely Hanover Junction. This was Passenger Station No. 8288 and Telegraph Station "U". Thus, we ended an enjoyable trip to Baltimore when No. 995 arrived at 8:07 P.M.

This little village of Hanover Jct. was an important spot during the Gettysburg Campaign of the Civil War. It was a major railroad junction as well as a telegraph station on the system carrying messages between Gettysburg and Washington. It was the junction of the Hanover Branch Railroad (later, the western Maryland) and the Northern Central (later Pennsylvania) and the only rail outlet available to Gettysburg during those Civil War days. All rail passage of men and materials connected with the Gettysburg Campaign had to be transported via this small village. A Pennsylvania State Historic Marker was installed here in 1953 to note the activity in the area. Rebel action took place here with the destruction of some railroad properties and the burning of the wooden bridge across the Codorus creek. Some minor damage was also done to the telegraph equipment, but after restringing the cut telegraph wires, service was soon restored. Fortunately the raiders overlooked the telegraph's power source. Hanover Junction was also the point where President Abraham Lincoln's party met with the party of Governor Curtin of Pennsylvania, and the two groups then proceeded together to Gettysburg on Nov 18, 1863 to participate in the ceremonies to dedicate the National Cemetery there on Nov. 19, 1863.

I'd like to share another bit of information that may not be of significant historical value, but was of great importance to me. The building used as a Hotel during the Civil War era also housed the railroad and telegraph facilities. Railroad records indicate that the train carrying the body of assassinated President Abraham Lincoln back to Springfield Il. passed through Hanover Jct. on Friday, April 21, 1865, at 5:55 P.M. But the building also had great significance for me in that it became my family's home. After Dad Shaffer was appointed Station Agent for both the Pennsylvania and the Western Maryland Railroads, facilities were available in the building for the Agent's family. Locally the building was known as the "Old Station House." As a kid growing up while living in a railroad station, I can attest to the great influence it had on my interest in railroads.

Another short railroad trip which was always an appreciative one for me was a Northbound trip to Harrisburg on a warm summer evening to enjoy a train ride was a highlight event of my boyhood days.

Dad and I would usually make these trips to Harrisburg by ourselves, leaving my sister and Mom at home. A Saturday evening was usually selected as a time to go. We would take train No. 993 at 4:58 P.M., the regular scheduled accommodation train to Harrisburg.

First station stop is Smyser. Don't ever look on a road map and expect to find Smyser - it won't be there. The Borough is known as Seven Valleys. Shortly after Smyser station we passed the site of another train wreck. This time it was a freight train, and I am not aware of any injuries. But I am aware of lots of watermelons strewn along the tracks and the bank along the track. Community residents soon gathered at the scene and were seen carrying as many watermelons they were able to handle and enjoy later at home.

Glatfelter Station is next. Looking out the windows on the right we soon see the engine entering Dipfers Curve, a complete "L" curve. Just moments later we enter Howard Tunnel, the only tunnel on the Baltimore Division. The tunnel was a rather short one, but during daylight hours the train crew was required to turn on the lights in passenger coaches while the train passed through the tunnel. Howard, still in service today, is the oldest railroad tunnel in the United States in continuous rail usage. The York County Rail/Trail shares usage of the tunnel. A tunnel on the old Pennsylvania Portage Railroad near Johnstown, PA predates construction of Howard, but it has been out of service for many years.

Brillhart is next station, then Grantley (suburban York) and then York Station. For a short distance, after entering the city, the tracks went down the center of Pershing Avenue. Slow speed? Yes, indeed.

After the York passengers detrained at the station, a white-jacketed employee of the Union News Agency entered the day coaches of the train with this announcement: "Ham and cheese sandwiches, hot coffee, Hershey Chocolate Almond Bars, ice cold milk." Wish I could have bought one of the Hershey's almond bars. Dad says he doesn't have the money. Probably right.

Leaving York station the long freight warehouses are on the right and adjacent is "K" Telegraph Tower, and the junction of the Ma & Pa on the right. The old York County Jail is in the background at this point. Here, too, the Main Line to Harrisburg swings left from where the Fredrick Branch leaves the Main, continuing on to Columbia, PA. After crossing the bridge at Wrightsville over to Columbia, the trains continue via the Philadelphia Division to Lancaster. Here passengers would change trains for Philadelphia. The Fredrick Branch heads in the opposite direction from York to Hanover and Frederick MD, making connection there with the Baltimore & Ohio at B.& O. Junction.

Next stations, Emigsville, Mt. Wolf, Wago. Here at Wago Junction is the confluence of the low-grade line from Baltimore via Columbia on the East bank of the Susquehanna River, and recrossing the river to the West bank just south of Wago on the Shock's Mill Bridge, carrying

freight trains bound for Enola Yards. Here, too, passengers get their first view of the Susquehanna River on the right while enroute to Harrisburg. The river is very wide but is not navigable.

Next station stop, York Haven. To me, this was an exciting place. The tracks were close to the electric generating plant of the Pennsylvania Power & Light Co., with lots of water from the Susquehanna River available for use at the plant. Fascinating for me.

After York Haven on to Cly, Goldsboro, Marsh Run, New Cumberland, East Lemoyne, and making a turn to the right to cross the long concrete arch bridge across the Susquehanna. I always enjoyed watching ahead on curves like this to see that K-4 engine, with its side-rods bouncing up and down and smoke pouring from the stack. This was a good spot to get a good view because the windows could be open since there was no air conditioning available. While crossing the river, on the right I could see the bridge carrying Reading R.R. trains close by, and I always enjoyed seeing a Reading train crossing as our train was doing.

After the river crossing, the track turned left and we quickly entered the train sheds of the Harrisburg station, 6:28 p.m.

Getting off the train, and onto the platform, walking past the locomotive, one got the feeling that this K-4 was a living, breathing, piece of equipment. We ascended the steps to the station area, then through the waiting room and out to the street. The large Reading Station was adjacent to, and accessible from, the Pennsylvania Station.

Leaving the station, we would stop at a small store nearby and get a supply of roasted peanuts. Then down to the river-side park, it being only a short walk from the station. Selecting a bench to sit and enjoy some peanuts. It was but a short time till we had guests with bushy tails to share our peanuts. This I remember as an interesting event - warm summer evening, pleasant park area, the wide Susquehanna just rolling along - made for a short memorable visit to the Capital City.

The famous ROCKVILLE BRIDGE, the longest stone-arch bridge in the world is just several miles north of the Harrisburg station. West-bound trains of the 4-track main line curve left onto the bridge to cross the Susquehanna, while at this same point the old Northern Central tracks continue northward on the east bank of the river enroute to Sunbury.

The enjoyment of feeding the squirrels some peanuts in the river park soon came to a close with Dad and me heading back to the station, to board the train home again. Boarding train No. 998 leaving Harrisburg at 8:20 P.M. and arrival at Hanover Jct. at 9:49 P.M. End of a good trip to Harrisburg.

Roger E. Shaffer
2000

**Pennsylvania Railroad
Baltimore Division
(Harrisburg to Baltimore)**

April 30, 1922

Hanover Jct. - Station 8288			
Eastbound		Westbound	
518*	1:23 AM	535*	12:45 AM
50	5:41 AM Liberty Limited	503	12:16 AM
990*	5:52 AM	541*#	5:53 AM
8020*	6:20 AM Milk Train	991*	9:27 AM
574	6:30 AM Red Arrow	971	10:12 AM
528	6:50 AM Spirit of St. Louis	8021*	12:32 PM Milk Train
976	8:02 AM	527	1:18 PM
922*#	9:19 AM	505	2:16 PM
530	10:55 AM	993*#	4:58 PM
500*	1:28 PM	529	5:31 PM Liberty Limited
502	2:05 PM	553	7:03 PM Red Arrow
544	4:54 PM	995*	8:07 PM
994*#	5:38 PM	975	8:40 PM Spirit of St. Louis
970	6:32 PM	507	9:08 PM
524	8:05 PM	979	9:43 PM
998*	9:45 PM	517	11:37 PM

*** Scheduled Stop**

Local Mail

R.E.S.

Pennsylvania Railroad Stations -- Baltimore to York

Miles from Baltimore	A	B	C
3.3	Woodbury		Woodbury
4.3	Melvale		Melvale
6.0	West Factory		Mt. Washington
6.6			Bare Hills
7.1	Relay House	Relay	Hollins
7.4			Brightside
7.8			Lake
8.4			Ruxton
9.2			Riderwood
10.5			Lutherville
11.7		Timonium	Timonium
12.9			Padonia
13.5	Texas		Texas
14.9	Cockeysville	Cockeysville	Cockeysville
15.8	Ashland		Ashland
17.8			Phoenix
18.0	Westermans		
19.6		Sparks	Sparks
20.5	Glencoe		Glencoe
22.3			Coebett
23.0	Monkton	Monkton	Monkton
25.0			Blue Mount
26.5	White Hall		White Hall
27.2			Greystone
28.8	Parkton	Parkton	Parkton
30.1			Walker
31.5	Bee Tree		Bently Springs
34.3	Freelands	Freelands	Freeland
37.1	Summit		New Freedom
38.6	Strasburg		Shrewsbury
41.0	Seitzland		Seitzland
41.8	Glen Rock	Glen Rock	Glen Rock
44.2			Larue
45.5			Coal Yard
46.2	Hanover Jct.	Hanover Jct.	Hanover Jct.
47.0			Smyser
49.0	Glatfelters	Glatfelters	Glatfelter
50.0	Tunnel		
52.3			Brillhart
53.9	Forks Codorus		
55.7			Grantley
57.1	York	York	York

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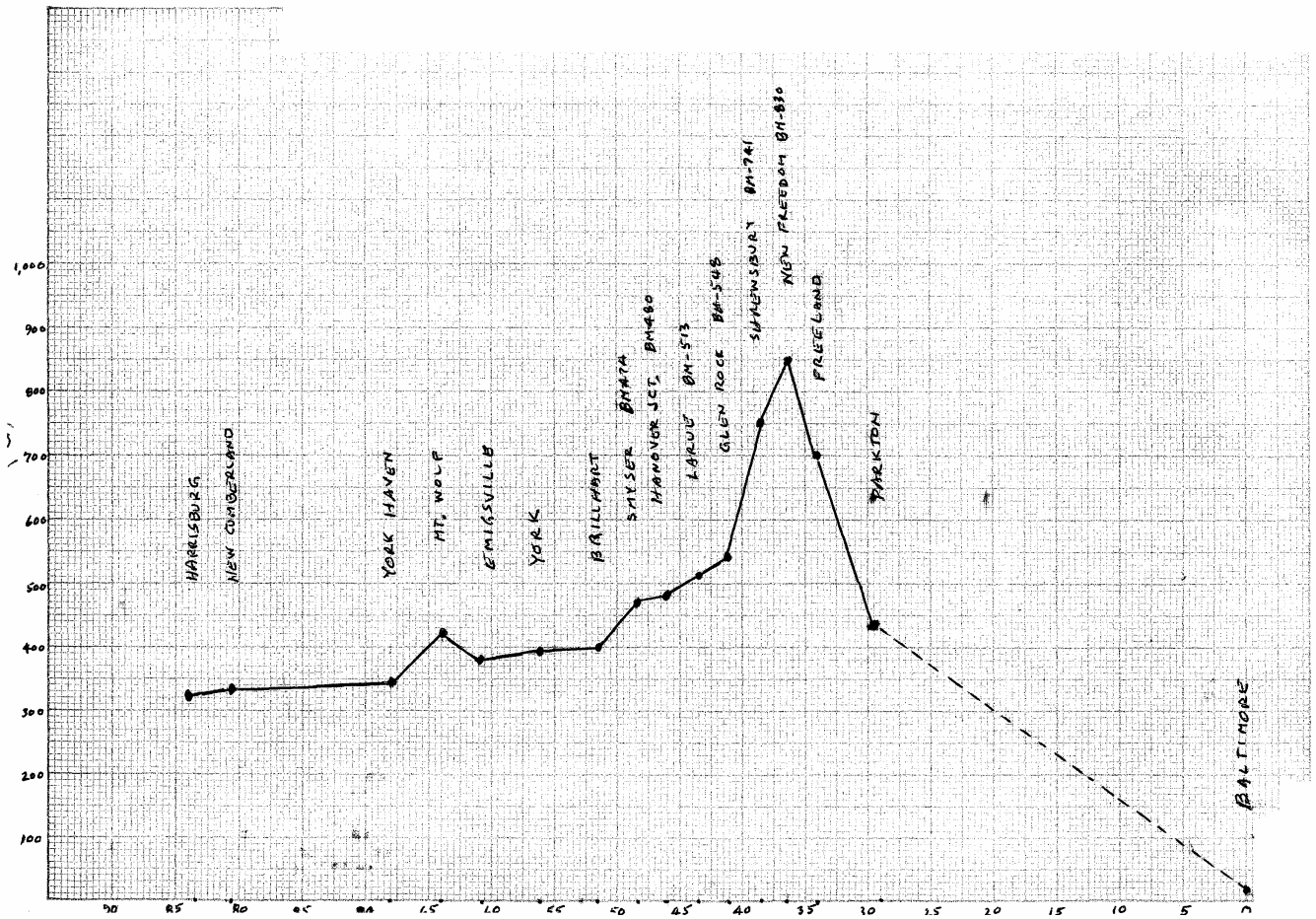
- A- Baltimore & Susquehanna
American Railway Guide - May 1854 Original Copy
- B- Northern Central R.R.
Railway Guide - June 1868 - Reprint Copy
- C- Pennsylvania R.R.
Employee's Timetable - April 1922 - Original Copy

Pennsylvania Railroad York to Harrisburg Stations

Miles from Baltimore	
60.6	Emigsville
63.9	Mt. Wolf
67.4	York Haven
68.8	Cly
71.3	Goldsboro
80.1	New Cumberland
83.3	Harrisburg

R*E*S* 1982

Pennsylvania Railroad Baltimore Division



Hanover Jct. to Philadelphia (1926)

Now let's go for another trip on the "Pennsy", from Hanover Junction to Philadelphia and return. This is written a long time after the actual trip but it is still very vivid in the mind of one who has reached an advanced age of 13 years. This was an event that occurred back when the "Teens" were in effect. Many details are apt to be missing, but the memories have not faded one bit.

Boarding the train at the Junction, Dad and I were on our way to the Sesqui-Centennial International Exposition in Philadelphia in 1926. We took train No. 541, around 6:00 A.M., making the regular stops at Smyser, Glatfelters, Brillhart, Grantley, and then York.

At York it was necessary to change trains, transferring to a Frederick Branch train to Columbia, and then on to Lancaster via the one time route of the Columbia R.R., now the P.R.R. Philadelphia Division.

At York Depot the Frederick Branch trains arrived and departed on the track which was the farthest from the station building. I don't recall how long we were in York before boarding the train to Lancaster, but with our anticipated destination in mind, I'm sure it must have seemed like a long time.

Time for departure came, and the proceed signal was given by the Conductor to the Engineer with two short pulls of the cord, and having received a clear board from the Operator in "K" interlocking tower, the train began to move. Soon to enter the main line east-bound tracks, then to cross over to the Westbound main, pass the Maryland & Pennsylvania R.R. interchange, K tower, and then switching on to the Frederick branch. Also noticeable at this point was the old York County Jail. Seeing all those heavily barred windows made an impression to me, wondering what those people in there might be doing. This thought soon faded as the train continued past Rockburn, Heistand, Stony Brook, Campbell, Hellam, Stoner, paralleling the Kreutz Creek and nearing Wrightsville on the banks of the Susquehanna River. Suddenly the tracks turned north, to the left, into Wrightsville as the car wheels made their usual screeching noise when negotiating a sharp curve.

Then a station stop, Wrightsville. Here again the car wheels sang their screeching tunes, for the tracks at the station location are on a curve east, to the right, as the tracks approached the bridge across the Susquehanna river.

When the train crew received approval to approach the bridge, all other vehicular traffic headed for the bridge stopped. The reason was that all forms of transportation shared the bridge and it only allowed single lane traffic, so when a train occupied the bridge, cars waited.

This bridge was a replacement for the wooden covered bridge which was deliberately destroyed by fire in 1863 to prevent Confederate troops from using it for their intended purpose of attacking Philadelphia during the Civil War. I recall, as a kid, having read a story about the bridge on the Children's Page of the York Gazette & Daily newspaper. For some certain local celebration, a band was to march across the old covered bridge. The bass drummer took one look at the bridge and commented, "How am I going to get my drum through that little hole at the other end?"

Well, the train made it and at the east end the tracks curved south, to the right, joining the low-grade line at Columbia. This is the main route from Harrisburg to Perryville Md. Here the train stopped at the Columbia passenger station. York to Columbia, according to the time-table, was 26 minutes. A connection was made with the Reading Railroad here in Columbia. This line into Columbia was a branch of the Reading from Reading to Lancaster.

Leaving Columbia and the low-grade line, we headed east on the old Columbia & Lancaster R.R. right-of-way. As we neared Lancaster the tracks merged with the main line to Harrisburg at Dillerville. This was, and still is, a popular point for photographers.

At Lancaster it was necessary again to change trains for our last leg of the trip, to one coming from Harrisburg enroute to Philadelphia. Soon after leaving Lancaster we pass Leaman Place, junction of the Strasburg Railroad Co. As of 1993 the Strasburg is very much alive and well. Steam powered excursion trains are of prime importance, but freight movement also plays an important part in Strasburg activity. The line extends into the town of Strasburg which is now the home of the Pennsylvania State Railroad Museum.

Lancaster County is a delightful farm area in which to travel, and the Pennsy rails traverse this beautiful country. Further on in our journey we pass the steel mills of Coatsville, on through Downingtown and Paoli. From Paoli to Philadelphia we ride under overhead catenary wires to supply power for that type of motive power. It was not practical to change locomotives here so the entire trip was powered by steam. Finally, we detrain at Broad Street Station, Philadelphia. A beautiful large old building and a busy place indeed. (I even tried to compare it with the station house at Hanover Jct. -- what a comparison!)

From Broad Street we took a trolley to the grounds of the Exposition. This was to become the first of seven World's Fairs that I was fortunate to visit in later years. I believe that the Sports Arena Stadium impressed me more than any of the other structures at the exposition. The Liberty Bell played a very important part in advertising, as well as in the extensive souvenir business. My special item of remembrance of the fair is a small metal casting of the Liberty Bell, which I cherish and have to this day. What a thrilling day this was in 1926 for a 13 year old.

The return home was accomplished on the same day, retracing the same route we took on the way to Philadelphia. We arrived home on train No. 518 scheduled for Hanover Junction at 1:23 A.M. Those were the days of rail dependency for travel, so there were a lot of trains to provide convenient hours in order to move from one place to another.

A Snow Storm

On March 14, 1993 a local news publication in the Lehigh Valley carried in large bold letters on the first page, "SNOW KO'S VALLEY". This blizzard of '93 was termed by some as the storm of the century. This terminology does not exactly refer to snow accumulation depth because we in this area had snows of greater depth, but was so named, I'm sure, because of its effect over such a tremendous area. Snow was received in Florida and then along the Atlantic seaboard into Maine and Canada. Many deaths were recorded and traffic movements brought to a halt in many areas.

This storm brought to mind another storm that had its effect on my travels of another earlier occasion. On January 27-28, 1966, I attended a meeting of the Roll Design Committee held at the Burns Harbor plant of Bethlehem Steel Co. On Saturday evening, the 29th, I boarded the Broadway Limited in Chicago, expecting to be in Philadelphia on Sunday morning in time to get the early morning train to Hellertown, planning to attend church services. However, my schedule was altered somewhat.

Soon after boarding the Broadway, I went to the dining car to enjoy my dinner. That accomplished, I returned to my roomette, settling in with a book to enjoy my evening on a train, since darkness prevented me from watching the passing scenery.

When I awoke in the morning, looking out the window, I saw the snow falling and the ground already covered with white. Watching the passing landscape, I seemed to be in unfamiliar territory. This was so different from what I expected to see, since, according to the time of day, Harrisburg should not be too far distant. This strange territory made me do some inquiry of the train crew. I was told that a derailment on the Pittsburgh-Harrisburg main line necessitated a detour to get to Harrisburg. This detour took us via Tyrone, Lock Haven, Lewisburg, and Harrisburg. Instead of arriving in the early morning as was expected, we arrived there at noon. The train was faced with a rather lengthy delay there, giving me chance to make a phone call home to inform them of my whereabouts. This was to be the first of numerous calls made at various locations before arriving home.

After a considerable delay at the station, we took off for Philadelphia. My thoughts then were that we would arrive in Philadelphia in time to get the evening train from Reading Terminal to Hellertown. No such luck, for it took eight hours to travel from Harrisburg to Philadelphia, arriving too late for that evening train. This eight-hour trip was composed of many stops and starts enroute. The electric locomotive, a GG-1, which was attached to the train in Harrisburg, met with problems of strong winds blowing snow into the motors, causing interruption of power. So without power, there was no movement, and to make matters worse, no heat. And no heat meant no hot foods in the dining car. The Pullman passengers were fortunate in that we had blankets for protection against the cold. I often wondered how the passengers in the coaches reacted to these unusual conditions. At the times when the train was at a stand-still, the strong winds blowing across the Lancaster County flatlands made their effects felt in the motionless cars of the train.

Finally, as we approached Paoli, a rescue crew came to escort us into Philadelphia and to provide heat to our very cold train.

Arriving in Philadelphia too late for the evening train to Hellertown meant staying in the city until morning. The early morning train would get me home in time to get to work on Monday morning. At least that's what I thought. After reporting my location to the family, I tried to make a reservation at two different hotels in the city for the night. However, due to the storm, I found nothing available. My thoughts then turned to sleeping on a 30th Street Station waiting room bench. Fortunately, this turned out to not be necessary for I found a room at the Benjamin Franklin, where I went by taxi.

Getting up early next morning, I went to the Reading Terminal to board the train to Hellertown. Arriving at the station, I was met with this announcement: "Bethlehem Branch Trains All Cancelled." Another call home to report existing conditions. Due to the fact that no one knew how soon the Bethlehem Branch trains would resume service, I just lolled around the station. At

least it was nice and warm there. After several hours, the trains began to go as far as Lansdale. I decided that Lansdale would be that much closer home, if nothing else, so I went that far. Arriving in Lansdale proved to be a dead-end, for that time at least.

I decided that the best thing was to stay in Lansdale that night, for there was a hotel adjacent to the station where, on a previous occasion, we had enjoyed a nice dinner with friends who were friends of the proprietors. Next morning I met another fellow who was bound for Bethlehem. There still were no trains to Bethlehem on account of snow drifts. We found that we could rent a car in Doylestown and then drive to Bethlehem since the highway was open. We then took a train to Doylestown and arranged for a car rental, arriving home safely 3 days after leaving Chicago.

Each time I called home to report my location, I was greeted with this comment, "Where are you now?"

Sure was good to be home after a rather exhausting journey, rather than one that I originally figured to be an overnight trip

I don't recall the snow depth, but I can liken it to the blizzard of '93, and I'm sure it did not cover so wide an expanse as the 1993 storm.

Hellertown to New York via Philadelphia

Very shortly after the inauguration of the high speed "METROLINER" train service on the Pennsylvania's north-east corridor between New York and Washington, I satisfied a particular yen that I had to ride one of those trains. One Saturday morning my good friend, Herb Weisel, and I boarded the train at Hellertown, destined for Philadelphia. Our dead-end station stop, Reading Terminal, on Market St. did not accommodate Pennsylvania trains, so we went down into the subway and boarded the Market St. subway to the 30th Street Pennsylvania Station. Here we purchased our tickets for passage to New York.

The train we were to board came gliding very quietly into the station on its run from Washington, D.C. to New York, N.Y., having made stops at Baltimore and Wilmington. We boarded, and soon were on our way for a quick trip to New York. By the time the train cleared the interlocking area, I said to Herb that I was going forward to see if I could see the forward path of the train while standing at the doorway to the operator's area. To one who is interested in train travel, this was a thrilling experience, and I didn't want to miss out on a single part if I could help it. The thrill I received was far beyond my expectation at that point.

By chance, it so happened that a qualified instructor had taken over control of the train, temporarily relieving the scheduled operator at that time. While standing at the doorway to the operator's area, I was able to observe and enjoy this particular position - much more exciting than sitting in a seat in the coach. After a while, I made a comment to the operator about the train and continued by saying something like this, "You fellows sure have come a long way since the days of the old steam engine. You could wear your Sunday clothes to work now instead of overalls."

The operator replied, "Yes, I used to fire one of those engines."

Being on the Pennsylvania Railroad I took for granted that he must have been a Pennsy fireman. The following conversation theme went something like this.

I asked, "Where did you operate?"

"On the line from Baltimore to Harrisburg", he replied.

Well that certainly sparked my interest, for Hanover Junction, our home, was located on the old Baltimore Division between Baltimore and Harrisburg.

Then I asked with great concern, "Do you know where Hanover Junction is?" "Indeed I do, what do you know about it?" he inquired.

As a bit of explanation I gave him a brief story that as a kid we lived in the old station house, as Dad was Station Agent there prior to being transferred to York, Pa. after the Hanover Junction station was closed.

His next question was almost too much to believe.

"Would you be Shaffer's kid?"

"That's correct", I replied. (I made no reference to this at the time, but I'm sure it was my brother Wayne, 16 years my junior, that he remembered having seen.)

Now we're talking about a common area, familiar to both of us. He commented on the old Coal Yard just south of the Hanover Junction station, an area of real familiarity. Meeting a person with knowledge of an area so familiar to me was surely an exciting conversation! During our conversation, my new-found friend pointed out numerous items relative to the operation of this high speed train which only increased my fascination. The trip to New York turned out to be much too short.

Exciting too, from where I stood, seeing the speedometer registering 100 mph. This was the fastest I had ever traveled on an earth-bound vehicle. Comparing that speed to today's rate of well above the 100mph mark indicates a terrific change, and I'm sure we have not seen the top limit which will be attained in time to come.

Shortly before entering the tunnel under the Hudson River and heading into New York, and into the magnificent Pennsylvania Station at 32nd Street, I returned to my unoccupied seat next to Herb. Noting that the seat had been unoccupied during the entire trip from Philadelphia, Herb

said he was sure I had been thrown from the train somewhere along the line. He decided, however, that I was just being "nosey." That was one time I didn't disagree with him. [There were many, many times in the before and after that time when differences of opinions arose between us. Then the usual "argument" ensued. I always enjoyed those so-called arguments because I would win some and I would lose some. But I would always learn something, because on most occasions some reference material would have to be researched to arrive at a mutual conclusion.]

After our arrival at Pennsylvania Station, we roamed around for a while, observing the many activities and actions which take place constantly in this, the greatest of all railroad stations.

There was no longer passenger train service available from Pennsylvania Station to Bethlehem via the Lehigh Valley Railroad, as in days gone by. So in order for us to continue our jaunt, we walked to the New York Port Authority Bus Terminal on 40th Street to board a bus for transport to Bethlehem. On our way to the bus terminal we visited a nice restaurant and enjoyed a good dinner.

The bus trip from New York was O.K. for accomplishing our goal, but the fascination of a train ride - a fascination which we both enjoyed on our ride from Hellertown to New York, via Philadelphia - was missing.