



February 2024

<https://patrolley.org/ptm-operations/>

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Executive Director's Update

By Scott R. Becker, Executive Director/CEO



2-7-2024

HAPPY 70th BIRTHDAY

Bill Monaghan photo

On February 7, 1954, a group of trolley enthusiasts with a vision to preserve trolley history had three vintage streetcars knock the rust off those rails one last time to bring the cars to County Home siding in Washington County. Lou Redman had convinced the Washington County Commissioners to lease the land there and the fledgling group was underway.

Fast forward 70 years later and look where the Pennsylvania Trolley Museum is today! It has been the hard work of many Museum volunteers and paid staff, along with fantastic community support over the years, that has helped us develop into one of the finest trolley museums in the world. We did not let Feb. 7, 2024, pass without some celebrations!

That evening, over 70 members gathered for a group photo and to hear an in-depth presentation by Bruce Wells on the history of the Museum going back to its roots in the early 1940s. Long-time members Jon McGrew and Art Ellis, Sr. gave their memories of the first cars arriving in 1954. The presentation was simultaneously broadcast to over 100 people on Zoom. Listening to the presentation, I was amazed and grateful at how tenacious our forbearers were in building the Museum with meager resources, and how blessed we are in the Museum we have today!

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70th Anniversary Cake
2-7-2024
Scott Becker photo

West Penn 832
Pittsburgh Railways 3756
Pittsburgh Railways M-1
Crossing Morganza Road
2-7-1954
PTM Archives



70th Anniversary
History Presentation
by
Bruce Wells
2-7-2024
Scott Becker photo

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Carrie Lepore - Deputy Secretary
 PA Dept of Community and Economic Development
 Office of Tourism 2-7-2024
 Jeanine DeBor photo

The Washington County Chamber of Commerce, a long-time supporter of the Museum, hosted their February breakfast at our new Welcome & Education Center with over 120 community business leaders attending. Jeff Kotula, President of the Washington County Chamber and Washington County Tourism Promotion Agency, spoke of his excitement for our new facilities. Carrie Lepore, Deputy Secretary, Office of Tourism for the Pa Dept. of Community & Economic Development, spoke glowingly in her remarks about how far the Museum has come and its importance to the Pennsylvania tourism industry.

Dollar Bank made a surprise \$10,000 donation to the Museum during the presentation. We thank Dollar Bank for their continued support!

A big thank you to Koppers, Inc. for donating new trolley line poles to us! They will allow us to replace old second hand poles up the Arden Valley and allow us to install heavier trolley wire feeder cable.

Trolley wire support poles donated by Koppers being unloaded at the Reliance Parking Lot 2-5-2024
 Scott Becker photo

Dollar Bank Check Presentation 2-7-2024
 Jeanine DeBor photo





Barry Stout Park playground equipment being unloaded
1-23-2024
Scott Becker photo

2024 is our Grand Opening Season for this new Trolley Museum. We have many events planned, including our Volunteer Banquet on Saturday April 27, our Black-Tie Gala on May 16, Street Fair May 18-19, and our West Penn Trolley Meet/Anything on Wheels events June 7-9. If you have not done so already, I urge you to come out and see the new facilities for yourself. It is worth a visit!

I want to thank you for all you have done to make our museum special and for the help you will provide this year to make it a great success!



An early morning image of the sunrise on a most wonderful day. Jeanine DeBor photo

Volunteer Open House
Saturday, February 10
Requalification Days Set 1 (Sat/Sun)
February 17 & 18
Requalification Days Set 2 (Wed/Fri)
February 21 & 23
New Operator Training
Saturday, February 24 - Sunday, February 25
Tour Guide Training
Saturday, March 2 and Sunday, March 10 (pick one!)

What Do Those Lights Mean?

Chris Walker -Archives Manager

Both Red Arrow and West Penn fleets carried marker lights; as both were operations with single track and passing sidings, these marker lights were important tools the car crews utilized in the era before instant two-way communication. Marker lights on the cars at these properties were used as “Train Signals,” conveying information to opposite-bound crews about how many cars they were encountering at a meet.

Over several decades of volunteering at PTM, I’ve heard various explanations as to how the marker lights were used in practice. Each story seemed to vary in the details, so curiosity got the best of me and I dug through our collection and unearthed an operations rule book for each property. Sure enough, each one had chapters on marker light usage.

It should be noted that in both instances, the rear of the car was to always be protected with red marker lights.

The 1964 Red Arrow rule book makes no mention of the white lights that are carried on 66. Years ago, I found a Philadelphia and West Chester Traction rule book from the 1920s at the Hagley Archives in Delaware (which is where Red Arrow’s corporate records ended up), and I remember a reference to the white lights denoting an extra train – i.e., a car running without schedule rights. I’m going from memory though, and forgot to make a copy while I was there.

It’s interesting to note that the front marker lights at these two properties carried completely opposite meanings!

Red Arrow Lines

Code of Rules for Government of Operators and Operation of Cars and Buses
Effective February 1, 1964

Rule 126 – Markers:

*The following signals will be displayed on each side of the front of every car not followed by a second section as markers to indicate front of car:
Two (2) green lights.*

Markers must be kept lighted at all times both day and night. In case the lights in these markers fail to burn, Operators will immediately notify the Dispatcher from the nearest telephone.



Front of car – not followed by additional section(s)



Rule 127 – Sections Displaying Signals:

Two red lights displayed on the front of the car denote that the car is followed by another car running on the same schedule and entitled to the same time table rights as the car carrying the red signals.

Front of car – carrying signals for following section(s)

West Penn Railways Company
Rules and Regulations Governing the Operating Department
In Effect May 1, 1921

**Rule 101, Train Signals -
Signals for Sections:
101 (g)**

*By day, green flag, or marker light
unlighted, green glass to front, or by
night, green flag, or marker light
lighted, green light to front, displayed
in either case at front left corner of car, in-
dicates car has follower.*



GREEN

RULE 101 G

*Front of car – carrying signals for
following section(s)*



RED

RULE 101 H

101 (h)

*By day, red flag, or marker light
unlighted, red glass to front, or by
night, red flag, or marker light
lighted, red light to front, displayed
in either case at front left corner of
car, indicates car has no follower.*

RED ON THE REAR

*Front of car – not followed by
additional section(s)*

Photos by Tom Pawlesh
Artwork by DF Cramer

The Good Ole Days

DF Cramer - Editor

I cannot begin to tell you the number of times I have spoken with a guest at the museum and they bring up “The Good Ole Days” and I always find it comforting that they have such fond memories of the past; or at least the think they do. The past means many things to many people and I can tell you that I have many fond memories of the past, but I do not look back with rose colored glasses.



We have all seen images like this and comment on the price of gasoline. Wouldn't it be nice? This image was taken by Joseph Jessell in August 1967. 28 cents converts to \$2.56 when one considers inflation. The price is not far off the \$2.99 currently available in western Pennsylvania.

Our museum covers a history of about 200 years of the past if one considers the beginnings with the horse car in the early 1830's, the cable car in the mid-1870's and the Frank Sprague developments in the late 1880's. Luckily for us, we have the opportunity to look back and place history into chunks of time. That makes learning the past a little easier. **YOU DON'T NEED TO KNOW EVERYTHING!** No one does. What follows in a very generalized overview of those chunks of time.

I often use my family and pop music to reference history, they are two things I am familiar with that helps define the time periods For example: two of my great grandparents were born in Derry Twp in 1852, the same year the Pennsylvania Railroad made it to Pittsburgh. Imagine what life was like. No giant steel mills, no electricity, little public sanitation and health care that was abysmal compared to today. There were no machines other than a few grist mills And before the railroads came, it would have been incredibly quiet.

By the time my grandparents were born in the 1870's, American Industrialization had set the stage for massive growth of our cities and towns. Some towns were created out of empty land. Not just the coal towns, but places like Ford City and Trafford were created by industrialists to expand their empires.



PTM Archives

When I look at images like this, I know how hard life was. They now have electricity, but are still heating and cooking with coal. This is East Ohio Street and the car is headed to Etna. My grandmother lived in the Widow's Home on the North Side from 1946-1972. For most of that time, her one room apartment had cold running water and a small coal stove. She cooked on a hot plate. Hot water, bath and flush toilets came in 1969. She actually had it better than some.

Manufacturers sent representatives to eastern Europe and Italy to recruit employees as the cities were growing faster than one could image. Much of the work was incredibly physically challenging. Injuries and even death were common occurrences, often with little or no compensation.

The peak of the trolley age was 1920. The “War to End all Wars” had ended in 1918 and KDKA Radio was broadcasting over the airwaves. It was the Roaring Twenties. The waltz was out and the two-step in. Women had earned the right to vote and the automobile was taking over. The steam railroads and trolley companies did not expect the coming onslaught of change in transportation from the automobile and truck, let alone these new-fangled airplanes that were barnstorming the country. People were flocking to silent movies and listening to the latest music on their wind-up Victrola. Life expectancy improved from the beginning of the century. The average age of men rose in 1925 from age 46 to 57 and women rose from 48 to 60. Today it is 73 and 79. When would you have sooner lived?

The Great Depression during the 1930's eventually ended with World War II. Programs such as Social Security, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, Civilian Conservation Corps and more were designed to provide financial stability during one of the most difficult times in American history. Many of those trolley lines that survived the car/truck incursion in the 1920's were not able to make it through the Depression, those that did had a sudden return of patrons during the war. The industrial base that eroded during the previous decade came back quickly as the Arsenal of Democracy. Women took over many of the jobs vacated by male soldiers. There were no new cars. As gasoline and rubber were rationed, people returned to the streetcars. Our public transit systems were tested and those private companies did what they could to keep up, but the end was not kind.

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After World War II, thousands came home and desired to get on with life. Dad came home on the Washington Interurban in June, met mom, who spent the war working at Hazel Atlas and got married in August. Remember, if they were old enough to go off to war, they were old enough to have only known a world of depression and war for the previous 15 years of their young lives. The demand for new housing developments outside the traditional city suburbs increased through the 1950's and the automobile came into its own out of necessity. More cars meant more roads, some even paved! The airlines were now connecting east and west. Even the famous Brooklyn Trolley Dodgers made the move to California. And a major shift occurred as more students spent more time in school. The teenager suddenly became a market unto themselves.

The 1960's brought civil unrest and the final take over of the remaining transit systems. Public ownership in the creation of SEPTA in southeastern Pennsylvania, the Port Authority in Allegheny County and a myriad of other governmental transit agencies relieved the companies of providing a service that never really paid for itself. It still doesn't. Over the ensuing decades various agencies have made an impact and light rail transit has seen a resurgence in use, but political whimsy puts them on constant edge.

Having a generalized idea of what life was like is incredibly important. We have to look at their lives through their experiences, not ours. They could not predict the future with much more accuracy than we can. Be kind to our guests when they bring it up, encourage their positive memories, but make sure they have a grip on reality by reminding them of the challenges our ancestors faced in a positive way. Maybe ask a question such as: "Would you want to give up what we have to go back?" The more you know about the past, the more you can bring it to life.

History is not about things. History is about events that effected people and how people effected events.

Our History

DF Cramer - Editor

As we celebrate our 70th birthday in Washington County, it is important to know the history of US. Talk to the members who have been here, especially those with numbers below 600 or so. We owe a debt of gratitude to those folks who have stayed the course with a vision for the future while preserving the past. However we cannot rest. Continued recruitment and training of new volunteers is imperative for growth. As we move farther away from the trolley era we must continue to mentor each other. It is refreshing to have a large group of enthusiastic young volunteers. Encourage them, give them opportunities to grow, talk and listen to them. I can guarantee hanging with younger folks will help you stay fresh.

Two Bells has been published by the Operations Department for many years. Originally a printed and mailed document edited by the Operations Manager, I turned it into a digital document when the then new Ops Manager Walt Pilof asked me to help. My first issue was October 2008. This issue could not have come at a better time as it is my 100th. I hope you have found it interesting.