

SEVEN-POINT-FOUR

The newsletter of the Friends of the Stewartstown Railroad, Inc. A Pennsylvania non-stock not-for-profit Organization, tax exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.



RIP Raymond E. Reter

It is with great sadness and regret that we must announce the passing of one of the original founders of the Friends of the Stewartstown Railroad, Inc. Mr. Raymond E. Reter.

Mr. Reter had been active with the Stewartstown Railroad for close to two decades. He served in a variety of roles including: Newsletter Editor, Station Master, President, Secretary, gift shop manager, and most recently Treasurer. He was a very loyal and dedicated member who cared deeply about the railroad, but most importantly to him, the Friends organization.

Ray leaves behind a major void that can hardly be filled. Please bear with us as we find our way forward without one of our most loyal Friends. Thank you, Ray, for your many years of selfless service and dedication to the Friends. We will miss you.



Friends of the Stewartstown Railroad, Inc. Selected as a Recipient of a \$5,000 Match-Grant from the 2021 NRHS Railway Heritage Grant Program

Dedicated volunteers and board members from the Friends of the Stewartstown Railroad, Inc., a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, received great news this past week. For more than 3 years, they have been working hard to restore Former Reading Company Coach #1158 back into its near-original appearance to serve as a demonstration commuter-car showcasing inter-urban passenger service in the 1920's. Coach restorations, especially of this size, require a lot of time, money, skill, materials, and some luck! President and Project Manager Dave Watson states: "When I was informed that we were selected to receive a \$5,000 match grant from the 2021 NRHS Railway Heritage Grant program, I was absolutely ecstatic! We are so close to being able to complete the outside portion of the coach restoration. Receiving these funds will help us reach this important milestone!" The funds from this grant will be used to finish remaining body work, prepare surfaces, prime, and paint the outside of the coach.

The Friends of the Stewartstown Railroad, Inc. would like to thank the National Railway Historical Society (NRHS) for awarding a \$5,000 Railway Heritage Grant to our organization. Additionally, we would like to extend our appreciation to the Baltimore Chapter of the NRHS for writing a letter of support to accompany our grant application.

Donations toward this project are always welcomed and appreciated. If you would like to send in a donation toward the Coach 1158 restoration project, please contact us to donate using PayPal. Or checks can be mailed to: Friends of the Stewartstown Railroad, Inc., C/O Coach 1158 Restoration Fund, PO Box 456, Stewartstown, PA 17363. Please be sure to notate Coach 1158 Restoration on your check. We sincerely say thank you to all our members, friends, and supporters that have helped make this project a reality.

The Friends Receive a \$1,000 grant from the Kathleen E. Thornton Educational Trust

We are pleased to announce that we have received a \$1,000 grant from the Kathleen E. Thornton Educational Trust. These funds will be used to continue restoration work on the Friends' former Reading Company coach #1158. We sincerely thank the Kathleen E. Thornton Educational Trust for their generous grant. We encourage anyone with an interest in passenger coach preservation and restoration to join in on this project. Stay tuned for updates as we continue to restore coach 1158 into her former Reading Railroad glory.



This is the first of four picnic tables made by our own Jim Kuhlman for our picnic garden. Thank you Jim!

2020-2021 Friends Officers

Dave Watson, President

Mike Ruane, Vice President

Thomas Stahl, Secretary.

Jack Stanford, Asst. Secretary

Donna Kuhlman, Treasurer

Kenneth Bitten, Director-at-Large

Jim Whipple, Director-at-Large

James Kuhlman, Director-at-Large

M. Larry Morgan, Director-at-Large

Miles Weaver,, Director-at-Large

Kay Hoshour, Corporate Registered Agent

Donna Kuhlman, Gift Shop Manager

Nancy Ruane, Newsletter Editor

Madeline McCabe, Newsletter Fulfillment

2021 Election Results

Recently, elections were held and here are the updates.

President – Dave Watson

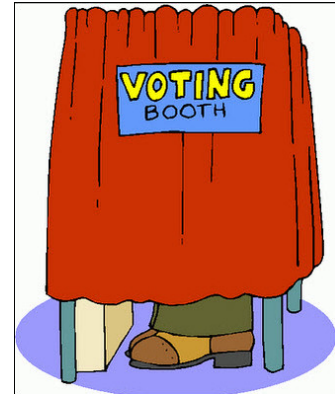
VP – Mike Ruane

Treasurer – Donna Kuhlman

Secretary – Thomas Stahl

Director at Large – Larry Morgan

Director at Large – Jim Kuhlman



Coach 1158 Update

In addition to recently receiving two grants toward coach 1158's external restoration, we have made a great deal of progress. All window posts on the Station side of the car have been welded in place. We have also patched the side-sheets where necessary. Several internal support posts required internal bracing to reinforce bad spots found when we cut out holes in the side sheets. Side sheet repairs have also been made to one end vestibule. Next, we will begin repairing the window posts and side sheets on the bankside of the coach. Thankfully, this side of the car is not as bad as the first, so welding repairs should not take as long. The four final roof vents are expected to be replaced during the month of July. If all of this goes well, we expect to paint the outside of the car before fall.



Dedicated to Preserving the Stewartstown Railroad—An Authentic American Antiquity
VISIT US ON THE WEB AT: stewartstownfriends.org

Quick update: July Work Weekend!

On the weekend of July 16, 17, and 18, our volunteers were busy again out on the line, maintaining and repairing the tracks of the Stewartstown Railroad.

Beginning on Friday, the team of Dave Williamson, John Nolan, Chris Lutz, Mike Ruane and Jenn Krieg fueled, oiled, and lubricated the work train, compressor car, air spiker and tampers, and loaded the materials needed for the day onto the train.

Our work trains vary by the tasks we want to perform, but usually are comprised of an A8 motor car, the compressor car with some gauge rods on it, a small flat car with kegs of spikes and lots of tie plates, and the tool car, which contains jacks, shovels, spike pullers, lining bars, wrenches, and lots of other tools. Some days the crews will swap out some of the cars in the train for the ballast car, or the long flat car loaded with ties, depending on what is needed.

As the rest of the crew was prepping the train, Mike and John lifted the tie inserter off the rails with the backhoe so that the boom was on the south side of the rails, since that was where the ties were positioned out on the line. After that was done, long switch ties were unloaded from John's trailer and stacked near the headquarters building, in preparation for August's work weekend, where switch work will be done. After a quick lunch at Rutters, John headed out on the Tie Inserter and the work train followed. John and Mike worked on pulling and replacing ties near the Picnic Grove, while Dave, Chris, and Jenn spiked, gauged, and tamped just past the End of Class I Track sign.

Saturday was a repeat of the work from Friday – tie replacement and spiking, gauging, and tamping, with one critical difference: the spiking crew (now including Jim Hogan) was working up near the tie replacement guys.

Up near the picnic grove, there had been very little work done on the track in decades. The ties were in rough, but not terrible shape, and the crew was replacing every second or third tie in a row. However, the ties would not come out easily. For whatever reason, either because of the soil conditions there, or the layout of the land, but every tie was pretty well stuck in place, because they had tree roots growing through them. Not huge roots, not much thicker than your thumb, but there were running next to, through, and into the ties. It was like they were tied into the ground, no pun intended! Many of the ties would actually break instead of being pulled out, and that added time and more work to get the crib ready.

So much work and force was required to get the ties out and back in that the rails were being pushed and pulled, and the gauge between the rails was being distorted to much that the tie inserter was off the rails multiple times. To remedy the situation, the spiking crew would gauge and spike the ties that were just inserted behind the Tie Inserter, and a rail gauger was used to keep the rails in gauge in front of the machine, again slowing the pace of work. Thunderstorms cut track work short in the late afternoon, but the crew went back to the station and did work there for the rest of the day.

Sunday had the crew (now missing John Nolan, but adding Mark Koppenhaver) replacing the rest of the ties placed out, now with the addition of mud from all the rain. After the ties were inserted, the first ties to be placed west of the Picnic Grove were prepositioned, for a future work weekend, to meet out year's goal of reaching Five Forks Road. Later that afternoon, Dave and Chris tamped up some low spots in the rail, near Mill Street.

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It was a hot, sticky weekend, but a fair amount of work was done. As always, if there were more volunteers we would have gotten more done, and we're getting low on some of the Maintenance of Way (MOW) material: ballast, spikes, and we use up a lot of fuel on the machines doing the work. The Friends always appreciate any donations of time, money, or material that will help the Railroad, and the volunteer crews are always thankful. If you can help in any way, we hope that you will.

Submitted by Mike Ruane

**You can buy train ride tickets, in advance, with your credit card through
WhistleTix on the Railroad company's website:
www.stewartstownrailroadco.com**

Articles and news items to be considered for publication in 7.4 need to be submitted by the first of each month to allow time for editing, fact checking and possible consolidation with other submitted items. When submitting photos, please submit as .jpg files and identify the photographer. Email submissions to: friendsofstrt@hotmail.com

**Next issue Steam
Trains at the
Stewartstown Railroad**



Journey of the Blue Caboose

By Miles Weaver

Say Blue Caboose to anyone who has ever been acquaintance with the Stewartstown Railroad, and I'll bet you will immediately conjure an image, or maybe a fond memory and comment or two. Since arriving at the Stewartstown Railroad in 2015 the Blue Caboose has certainly been a conversation piece and eye catcher. Standing proud and larger than life in front of the station, visible to all who drive or walk by, the Blue Caboose compels you to look. You can almost hear it calling out to you, look hear pay attention to this proud old railroad. This is my home!

The Blue Caboose has certainly been a positive addition to the railroad, if in just its advertisement value alone. And why not? It's got that classic caboose look.



View of the Blue Caboose as seen by passersby to the Stewartstown Railroad.

Although everyone now associates the Blue Caboose with the Stewartstown railroad, and may have even ridden on it; most don't know much about its origins or how it found its way to Stewartstown. So here are some highlights of its journey.

The Blue Caboose began its life in 1967 as one of Union Pacific's western railroad cabooses. Designated as UP 25623, it was designed for wide open spaces, where the deer and the antelope and wide high ceiling tunnels rein. UP caboose 25623 could raise its cupola high. One of a number of cabooses built for the Union Pacific Railroad during the 60's, it is relatively modern in its design, and rather large in its stature. Much taller than its eastern railroad brethren that must negotiate old, narrow, low clearance tunnels like the infamous Howard Street Tunnel under Baltimore City.

From its construction in 1967 through the 80's, UP caboose 25623 along with its UP companions did what cabooses were built to do. It protected the rear of its trains, carried its crews, and served the Union Pacific Railroad well. Unaware of its obsolescence almost from the point of its construction, little did UP caboose 25623 know that it was soon to become blue. First figuratively, then literally.

By the 1960's cabooses' days were numbered. Railroads were modernizing, reducing crews, and moving to End of Train Devices (ETD's) aka FRED's (Flashing Rear-End devices). So along with cabooses all over America, UP caboose 25623 was removed from service and sided to await and uncertain fate.

Fortunately for cabooses all over America, the general public loved them. This saved many retired cabooses from the scrap yard only to sit stationary as road side attractions, or in play grounds, some converted to shelters, or even rode side establishments. First loved, then often left abandoned and ignored. Doomed to suffer a slow death through neglect and deterioration.

Fortunately UP caboose 25623 would be saved from this fate. Well kind of.

To the rescue: the owner of Washington Aluminum Company.

Located in Baltimore Maryland (Go figure?) adjacent to Amtrak's (formerly Pennsylvania Railroad) "Northeast Corridor" trackage running between Baltimore and Washington D.C., Washington Aluminum Company, also known as WACO, was owned in the 80's and 90's by a well-connected former employee of the Union Pacific Railroad. Paul, WACO's owner at that time, arranged for the retired UP caboose 25623 to be given to, and delivered via rail to, the Washington Aluminum Company. So on a clear day in 1990, Union Pacific caboose UP 25623 was pushed onto a siding just up the street from WACO's plant, then loaded onto a flatbed truck to make the final one tenths of a mile journey to WACO's front yard where it was unloaded and placed on a short section of track prepared for the caboose's new resting place. And rest it did for 25 years.

Journey of the Blue Caboose (continued)



UP 25623 Arriving at Washington Aluminum Co. (1990)

During its stay at Washington Aluminum Company, UP caboose 25623 was transformed. The exterior paint, dirt and rust were grit blasted away, and a new exterior finish of blue paint was applied. This explains the clouded condition of the window glass on the Blue Caboose when it came to Stewartstown. Possibly due to carelessness, or possibly by design give the caboose was being transformed into a conference room where clouded windows would help with privacy, some of the windows were clouded during the exterior grit blasting process.

Why blue? Well blue and white are WACO's colors you see. So became the Blue Caboose. And what became of the original caboose interior? One old time WACO employee commented to me one day, "That caboose when it came here was really beat up and dirty inside." The original caboose interior was removed and discarded.

Talk about a conversion! Furnished with a specially made long and narrow oak conference table complete with matching chairs. The interior decorated with Union Pacific and other railroad memorabilia, including a replica "Regulator" wind up pendulum clock that now, by the way, hangs in the Stewartstown station. And a ceiling fan suspended from the cupola's ceiling, the Blue Caboose become not just a conference room, it became a conversation piece and an icon for WACO. Just as it has now become for the Stewartstown Railroad.



Remodeled conference room interior featuring a specially made oak conference table and a replica Regulator clock.

Many a visitor and vendor representative who recalled WACO would say, "You're the company with the caboose outside. I did my presentation in there.", or "I had my meeting in there." And many a WACO employee, current and former, myself included, interviewed and got their new hire orientation in the Blue Caboose.



UP 25623 at Waco Products, Incorporated at 1330 Knecht Ave., Arbutus (Baltimore), MD (Google)

Blue Caboose Conference Room outside WACO Products (circa 20100)

By 2001 Washington Aluminum Company was no more. Fortunately for the Blue Caboose (and former Washington Aluminum Company employees), new owners purchased the remaining assets of the now defunct Washington Aluminum Company. The newly formed company, WACO Products, Inc., also referred to as WACO, took over ownership of the plant, which included the Blue Caboose and continued to use the Blue Caboose as a conference room. But as we all know, all too well; times change.

The Blue Caboose, although beloved by many had its drawbacks, its position in WACO's front yard was considered less than ideal. It was difficult to heat in the winter, and difficult to cool in the summer. And it needed to be maintained. Fortunately for the Blue Caboose, WACO's new owners didn't want the caboose to turn into an eye soar given its prominence to all who entered the plant. So maintenance of the Blue Caboose was kept up. But the new owners began to tire of the Blue Caboose's drawbacks and cost of upkeep.

In the Winter & Spring 2014 addition of Seven-Point-Four, the newsletter of the Friends of the Stewartstown Railroad, the call went out. The newsletter read that the Stewartstown Railroad was looking for what it could call "its own" caboose. You see the Stewartstown Railroad at that time had several cabooses on its property, but none belonged to the railroad. And those cabooses were scheduled to soon be removed by their owners. Leaving Stewartstown Railroad without a caboose.

WACO has a caboose to donate. I remember one early spring Saturday in 2014, I was driving by the railroad in Stewartstown and saw a track crew. I remember walking up to the track crew and saying to Mike Ruane, (Mike and I were unacquainted at the time) "The company I work for has a caboose to donate if you are interested." Mike sized me up, I'm sure wondering if this guy was serious, or just a lunatic? The latter still undetermined to this day, Mike took my information and said yes, the railroad was interested and wanted to take a look at what WACO had to offer.

Of course, you already know the end of the story, but there's more to tell.

Not long after my conversation with Mike Ruane, John Von Briesen visited WACO. Although UP caboose 25623 now the Blue Caboose had not moved for 25 years, and the original interior had been removed, the Blue Caboose was in very good condition. Having been built in 1967, the caboose was a relatively new piece of equipment. It was equipped with roller bearing trucks, an all metal body, and it had been well taken care of. So the decision was made to accept the donation. What to do with the conference room interior, would be a matter left for another day.

The caboose itself was being donated, but moving it was on the railroad, and there was a problem. Recall that this caboose was much taller than most found in these parts. The caboose could be moved by truck, but its height posed a problem. Even if it was placed on a low bed trailer with the trucks removed, it would still be too tall to fit under the bridges along Interstate 83 the route to Stewartstown. There were only two options, cut off the cupola (Oh NO!), or transport the caboose by rail.

Transporting the caboose by rail was actually a viable option. After all that's how the caboose got to WACO. The spur up the street that the caboose came in on in 1990 was still there, and given that the caboose had roller bearing trucks, it could still travel on a class 1 rail line. But the caboose hadn't moved in 25 years, so work would need to be done to prepare the caboose for its transit on the main line one final time. And this preparation would also render the caboose use ready when it got to Stewartstown.

While arrangements were being made with CSX, the brakes needed work. Then the interior was removed for the conference room remodel, the air brake pipes that led to the interior of the caboose, used by the crew to monitor and control the brakes, were simply cut, removed, and the remains left open. All of those cut brake pipes would need to be identified and blanked off. The out of date break valve would also need to be replaced. And the brakes would need to be tested.

Meanwhile to roll on the main line again the caboose would need a new number. John chose NCBX 01. X meaning the equipment was privately owned.

Things progressed. The NCBX 01 number was painted on the side of caboose, the brakes were repaired and tested, and the necessary marking were added. An UMLER (Universal Machine Language Equipment Register) tag, another requirement to run on the main line, was procured and attached. The caboose was ready. . . . But there it sat.

The last leg of the journey was in a snag. Although the caboose could be moved to York. Try as they might, the Stewartstown Railroad could not work out arrangements to deliver the caboose from York down the Northern Central Rail to New Freedom. There was only one alternative. Plan B. Or maybe we should call it plan C for "cut", cut off the cupola..

Alternate arrangement to move the caboose by truck were made. Then one day, shortly before move day, rather unceremoniously, a cut was made around the cupola and lifting lugs were added to facilitate its removal on move day. Those lifting lugs are still there on the cupola, and can be seen as you look up at it to this day. So now you know. They are not original, and are definitely not there to lift the entire caboose. They are left as a reminder to those who know the story, that the cupola came off the day the Blue Caboose moved to Stewartstown.

Move day as you can imagine was a big day at WACO. Not much work got done that day as WACO employee gathered to watch the spectacle of the caboose being lifted into the air by a crane and hoisted onto a flatbed truck. First the cupola, then the caboose body, then the trucks. You know the trucks (wheel assemblies) and not attached. They have a locating pin and greased bearing plate, but if you pick up the caboose, the wheel assemblies stay on the ground, or tracks as the case may be. Only gravity and the weight of the caboose body keep the caboose on its trucks. Wave bye-bye to the caboose WACO.



Cupola being lifted off on Move Day



Caboose is in the Air!



Say Goodbye to the Blue Caboose WACO.

Imagine the reaction or drivers, both north and south bound alike, as they saw a blue caboose rolling up I-83.

Say hello to Stewartstown Railroad. When the caboose left WACO it made its way up Interstate 83 and over to Stewartstown where it was parked for several days in the then vacant lot where Dollar General now stands to await another crane to place it on the Stewartstown rails. On August 13, 2015 the time had come for Stewartstown to get its very own caboose. In reverse order of how the caboose had been loaded, first the trucks (wheel assemblies) were lifted and placed on Stewartstown main line at Mill Street. The caboose body was then lifted as the trucks were adjusted to the exact positions needed to match their locations under the body as the caboose body was then lowered onto its wheels. Last was the cupola,



The Blue Caboose arrives at Stewartstown

Work still needed to be done. The decision was made to keep much of the conference room interior, in large part because to recreate the original caboose interior would have been difficult, costly, and time consuming given that the original interior parts and fixtures were not preserved when the caboose interior was remodeled. So seats were added, and an idealized version of a caboose cupola perch was fabricated and installed instead. Finally in the winter of 2020 all the frosted windows were replaced with new clear window material, clearing up the cupola windows and making the Blue Caboose Cupola the place to be during excursions.



The Blue Caboose with Mighty-Mo, at its new home in front of the Stewartstown Station.

Now the Stewartstown Railroad has its very own caboose, and the Blue Caboose has a new home. May the Blue Caboose proudly serve the Stewartstown Railroad for many years to come.



John Von Briesen (right) Arrival day

I would be remiss if I concluded this article without giving credit to John Von Briesen. Many individuals both with WACO and with the Stewartstown Railroad worked together to help make the caboose move happen. However, without the efforts, commitment, and perseverance of John Von Briesen to see this project through, it's likely that the Blue Caboose would never have made it to Stewartstown.

John, Thank you.

**Some fun photos
courtesy from Jim
Hogan**



Photos
courtesy from
Dave
Williamson

Track work







Friends of the Stewartstown Railroad, Inc.
P.O., Box 456
Stewartstown, Pennsylvania 17363-0456

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Membership Classifications & Dues (Full-year, Jan.-Dec.)

- ☐ **Individual Membership** \$ 20.00
(Show your membership card and receive a \$2.00 discount on one regular Stewartstown Railroad train ticket, courtesy of the Stewartstown Railroad Company.)
- ☐ **Family Membership** (all members at same address) \$ 100.00
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Corporate members receive five (5) complimentary Stewartstown Railroad ticket coupons from the Friends organization.
- ☐ **Optional: general fund donation** \$ _____
- ☐ **Optional: endowment fund donation** \$ _____
- ☐ **Optional: equipment fund donation** \$ _____
- ☐ **Optional: right-of-way/track fund donation** \$ _____
- ☐ **Optional: Other donation please specify:** \$ _____

(You may specify a specific project on the line above for your optional donation if you wish)

Total Enclosed: \$ _____

The Friends of the Stewartstown Railroad, Inc., invites all who are interested in preserving the Stewartstown Railroad to join the Friends organization. The railroad was founded in 1884 and opened in 1885

One of the goals of the organization is to support our members as they perform their volunteer work on the railroad upgrading and maintaining the railroad's properties. Our volunteers' efforts help the railroad continue its operations over its 7.4 miles of tracks between Stewartstown and New Freedom, Pennsylvania via the Deer Creek Valley.

The Friends organization is a Pennsylvania non-stock not-for-profit membership organization. The Friends organization is tax-exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. The Friends organization owns a minority equity interest in the Stewartstown Railroad Company.

We're on the web at:

www.stewartstownfriends.org

Please send completed application and check to

Friends of the Stewartstown Railroad, Inc
P.O. Box 456,
Stewartstown, Pennsylvania 17363-0456

OR

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