



**Q4 Sept.-Oct.-Dec. 2021**  
 "Seven point four" is 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.

## President's message

The Christmas 2021 Season of the Stewartstown Railroad was a very busy time. The trains were constantly sold out necessitating more seating capacity for 2022! We thank everyone for their continued support, donations, and membership in our organization. Your support in 2021 was instrumental in keeping our valuable restoration work moving forward. At the present time, due to a serious volunteer shortage, we are turning to our support base to ask for anyone interested in volunteering to please consider joining us. Various opportunities are available - read on to learn more. If you are interested in running for a board or officer position of the organization, just let us know of your interest by March 15, 2022, to be added to the ballot. All candidates must be a current member in good standing with the organization to be eligible. We welcome anyone with an interest in joining our organization or renewing their membership to please find the sign-up / renewal form on the back page of this newsletter. Thank you!

## Volunteers Wanted - An opportunity for everyone!

Now more than ever, we need volunteers to help staff various positions around the railroad. Come join our team and experience the satisfaction of knowing you are helping to preserve railroad history in Southern York County. Unfortunately, like many organizations, we are in immediate need of volunteers to help carry out the necessary functions needed to keep our operations moving forward.

The positions of most critical need are:

- Giftshop Attendant – Opens / closes the store, stocks shelves, rings out customers, and provides customer service to shoppers.
- Ticket Agent – Opens / closes the station, sells / hands out tickets, verifies ride schedules, answers phones, and provides customer service to riders.
- Coach Attendants – Boards / Seats Passengers, narrates during the ride, cleans the coaches between trips, and answers questions from riders.
- Train Crew – Operates the trains, locomotives, and equipment necessary to ensure a safe ride for passengers. All crew go through an FRA-approved rules, training, and qualification program to participate.
- Track workers – installs ties, drives spikes, tightens track bolts, and cuts brush.

If you are interested in any of these positions, please contact [friendsofstrt@hotmail.com](mailto:friendsofstrt@hotmail.com)! Schedules are flexible and all training is provided. Thank you.

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## Volunteers needed to help with Various Coach Restoration Projects

The passenger coaches on our railroad are now more than 100 years old. They have provided thousands of guests with an incredible journey back in time. However, like many historic pieces, time has not been kind

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**Director-At-Large - Jim Whipple**

**Director-At-Large - Ken Bitten**

**Newsletter Editor - Joe Krepps**

### **Volunteers needed to help with Various Coach Restoration Projects (Cont'd)**

to them, and we need your help to keep them in good, presentable condition. Coach 1341 needs extensive work to the inside ceiling and outside metal roof. Some of its windows could use a coat of paint. It's roof and outside body really need painted, too. Coach 1158 needs to have its windows re-installed, inside ceiling re-constructed, and some repairs made to the floor before it will be ready to go back in to service.

Of most critical need currently is re-construction of the ceiling in 1158 and repair of the ceiling in coach 1341. If you have the time and wood-working skills, we would appreciate hearing from you. For the remainder of the mentioned tasks, we can train and provide you with the needed skills and materials to carry them out. Please let us know of your interest to [dmw280@gmail.com](mailto:dmw280@gmail.com). Thank you!



### **The Friends Receive a \$1,000 grant from the Kathleen E. Thornton Educational Trust & Memorial Donations in Honor of the Late Raymond E. Reter**

We are pleased to announce that we have received a \$1,000 grant from the Kathleen E. Thornton Educational Trust in memory of the late Raymond E. Reter. The FSR Board voted unanimously to combine this generous grant with other memorial donations received in memory of Mr. Reter to continue restoration work on the Friends' former Reading Company coach #1158 in his honor. We sincerely thank the Kathleen E. Thornton Educational Trust for their generous grant and memorial donations in memory of Mr. Reter. We encourage anyone with an interest in passenger coach preservation and restoration to join in on this project.

### **B & O Museum and FSR Organization Trade Unused Hi-Rail Pickup for a Reliable Backhoe**

For many decades, ties were inserted on the Stewartstown Railroad the old-fashioned way – by hand. This process is tedious, strenuous, and very exhausting. When the railroad was attempting to get back up and running around the 2008 – 2012-time frame, some ties were installed to maintain the track for limited motorcar operations. It became clear that two options existed to rehabilitate a significant portion of the track up to FRA class 1 status for full-size train operations: hire a contractor or purchase a piece of equipment and do the work ourselves.

After months (and perhaps years) of hoping for a miracle, a backhoe was spotted with a for-sale sign practically across the street from the engine house. The FSR board at the time decided to consolidate what little funds it had to purchase the 1970's Case 580C backhoe from Gordon's Towing. The backhoe went to work right away inserting ties on the very first section of FRA Class-1 track. During its lifetime, the backhoe was used to install hundreds of ties, load tons of stone in the ballast car for leveling the track and unload countless bundles of ties for insertion on the railroad.

This backhoe, while very useful, always needed constant maintenance being close to 40 years old. As the years went on it became less and less re-

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liable. It was to the point you now had to worry about whether it was going to start. This, combined with a myriad of so many other mechanical issues requiring constant work on the railroad, necessitated finding a more suitable replacement.

One of our regular volunteers also assists the B & O museum with mechanical issues. He saw they had a 1986 John Deere 210c backhoe surplus to their needs sitting around that needed a new home. He further noticed that it was newer and in much better condition than the one we have. The Friends Organization received the donation of a hi-rail pickup truck a few years ago. Despite the best of intentions, we were not able to make use of the hi-rail truck. The B & O Museum needed a newer, operating hi-rail truck. So, after some discussions, the FSR Board and B & O Museum agreed to a trade. Thank you to John von Briesen for donating the towing to bring the new John Deere 210C hi-rail backhoe to the Stewartstown Railroad. Thank you as well to John Nolan for making the arrangements with Gordon's Towing to Pick up the new backhoe. The new backhoe has hi-rail gear allowing it to be used anywhere along the Stewartstown ROW. Additionally, the Case 580C that the FSR organization purchased in 2012 was sold to the Allentown and Auburn railroad for \$4,500 where they will rehabilitate it for use by their track department to change out ties.



### **The Power of Partnership: The Mighty Pennsylvania Railroad Once Provided the Stewartstown Short line With a Road to Prosperity**

By Bill Histed

The Stewartstown Railroad Company and the once mighty "Pennsylvania Railroad Company,"

for years had a close relationship in more ways than one. I am a far cry from a railroad historian of The Stewartstown Railroad or any other railroad. But sometimes seeing the reasons why things were once done the way that they were is good to know. There are some great railroad historians and even railroad technological societies. There are also museums that keep the wondrous past from totally slipping away.

Others have written or commented on the history of The Stewartstown Railroad in much more detail. I was asked to give an assessment of the historical connection between The Stewartstown Railroad and the former Pennsylvania Railroad and why that mattered. That sometimes unofficial partnership included, among other things, the Stewartstown Railroad being served for a way to the national railroad grid and the Pennsy owning substantial stock in the Stewartstown at one time. It should be noted for the record, the obvious. At no time did this relationship mean that The Stewartstown Railroad Company ever lose its corporate sovereignty because the Pennsylvania Railroad had a close relationship by necessity. As public utilities in good standing, they HAD to work with each other. The better the relationship, the better the result for shippers and passengers. Since its incorporation back in 1884, the moving of its first revenue wheel in 1885, the STRT has always been an independent railroad and has never merged or "reorganized," making this railroad one of the oldest, continuous common carriers of any type still in business in the United States. From what I can find, the Pennsylvania Railroad took over the Northern Central almost a quarter of a century before the Stewartstown Railroad was built. To be blunt about it, the Stewartstown Railroad needed the Pennsylvania Railroad a lot more than the Pennsylvania Railroad needed another shortline to service. You see this relationship today in the airline industry where the big airlines often are fed "feeder" passengers from smaller airlines that serve less populated areas. Often, local or regional airlines know their service areas better than a larger airline with larger costs could do.

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## **The Power of Partnership (cont'd)**

The railroad industry back then was interlocking, to use a railroad term with another meaning. Cooperation was essential for good service for the industry. Cooperation was much more profitable than not cooperating, even though there still was much fierce competition on competing routes, especially. Generations later, this would be dealt with by deregulation and mergers. Some historians claim that the national railroad map was "overbuilt," but many industries go through consolidations and tailoring. Banking is going through this now.

### **Competition**

The Stewartstown Railroad was built mostly with dollars from farmers, small town merchants and other locals. No huge railroad barons came calling on Stewartstown. Building of this railroad was about as much of a local effort as one could get.

The Pennsylvania Railroad was so big and powerful that one historian quipped that in many homes, when someone talked about "the president," he or she meant the president of the Pennsylvania Railroad, not the president of the United States. Back in the late 1800s, railroads were much more vital to travelers and shippers and the federal government was so small compared with today's Washington, D.C. that you almost needed a microscope to see it. While the nation's freight railroads still handle a huge piece of the pie, service today is mostly wholesale to larger shippers. Many of the big railroads do not get excited about a few carloads here and there. The average citizen no longer knows different surviving railroads, what cities they serve, what time trains come and so on. They know more about what interstate highways and where they go and about airlines and where they go.

Once, many people, including family members of employees of railroads, knew the name of the railroad company president. Today, millions know the names of computer and technological giants as Bill Gates or the investment geniuses as Warren Buffett. Back in the day, many communities along the line knew the name of the railroad president, and most likely the name of the superintendent of the division.

Partnerships then, partnerships now

Most people with any interest in railroading already know about the former Pennsylvania Railroad, which called itself "the Standard Railroad Of The World." While there were other strong competitors, the "Pennsy" covered some very important industrial and population centers on its general east-west route from New York City to Chicago. Yes, there were many branches, subsidiary railroads and interests held in other railroads. At one time, the Pennsylvania Railroad owned a lot of stock in The Stewartstown Railroad. Having taken control of the former Northern Central Railway in 1861, the Pennsylvania Railroad's subsidiary would be the Stewartstown Railroad's connection to the outside world when it was built in 1884 and saw first revenue service in 1885. The Northern Central Railroad was headquartered in Baltimore and that is where many farmers and small businesses using The Stewartstown Railroad wanted access to. Access to Baltimore and the Port of Baltimore offered higher prices sometimes to farmers. When The Pennsylvania Railroad took control of the Northern Central, it was an historic watershed event in our nation's history with the onslaught of the War Between the States.

Back in the day, for a short line as The Stewartstown, your connecting railroad was about everything. Your connecting railroad had a lot to say about the quality of service, connecting schedules for passenger, mail, express and freight and public perceptions.

You most definitely wanted a connecting railroad that had stability, both operating and financial, which The Pennsylvania Railroad offered The Stewartstown Railroad. As in any relationship, even between a server in a restaurant and the customer, it is a lot more fun when you have good interplay between the participants. You can always tell when service is friendly or unfriendly, or whether the server even cares that you walked through the door.

No different today "Partners and Team Work"

The need for good relationships between businesses have not changed a whole lot since the 1800s. Today, much common corporate buzz words used include such phrases as "our business partners," or "our teamwork."

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A trend in recent times in the corporate world is “just in time delivery,” though this practice has gotten shattered in our current world of Covid-19 and its variants. With “just in time delivery,” a practice used to cut down on warehouse costs and time, you had better have a great business “partner” you could depend on. Even the word “warehouse” now means “distribution center.”

Most every business has business partners, vendors, suppliers, call it what you will. Many businesses need utilities, insurance, transportation, raw materials, office supplies, machine suppliers, parts and tools suppliers. So looking at it that way, the long-time working partnership between The Stewartstown Railroad and the Pennsylvania Railroad was not uncommon. It was a relationship that lasted a long, long time.

Who could have imagined generations ago when the mighty Pennsylvania Railroad and the Stewartstown Railroad coexisted with one another, that it would be the Stewartstown Railroad that would be left standing? Most students of modern railroading know what happened to once Pennsylvania Railroad Company dynasty. As in the entire industry, competition from new sources.... modern passenger car and truck travel, improved highways and the interstate highway system, airplanes and strong union work rule sickened much of the industry. Some big railroad bankruptcies followed, a few regionals went completely out of business and Congress passed legislation that would forever change railroading.

For the Pennsylvania, we all know of the merger with the also huge New York Central Railroad that proved a disaster in a thing called Penn-Central. Penn-Central filed bankruptcy which shocked the nation. An aftermath of what was Conrail which also included some other financially sick railroads in the mix. Then Conrail got in a bidding tug of war between Norfolk Southern and CSX. Several branches were spun to other railroads or new short lines were created.

The Pennsy is long gone. I was born in and grew up in the Pennsylvania Railroad division town of Crestline, Ohio. About the time the Stewartstown Railroad was being built in the 1880s, my great-grandfather was hired in the roundhouse there as a stationary engineer. From that point on,

on both sides of my family, someone in the family worked on the same railroad until Dad retired as a locomotive engineer in 1982. My great-grandmother cleaned rooms in the railroad hotel above the station. But as much as I don't want to believe it, my family was not unique in railroading. At one time, the railroads of the United States employed more than one million people at one time. The Stewartstown Railroad has survived some of the largest corporations that met their doom. Being huge is not a guarantee for survival.



### **Former Stewartstown Railroad Locomotive #6 “Little Mo” Purchased for Restoration & Eventual Operation**

In early 2021, Stewartstown Railroad Chief Mechanical Officer/ Friends Member Mark Koppenhaver, purchased former Stewartstown railroad locomotive #6 “Little Mo” from the Silver Lake Railroad in New Hampshire. He is in the process of preparing it to be moved by truck in Spring 2022 to York, where it will receive a mechanical and cosmetic overhaul. His plans are to return it to eventual operation on the Stewartstown Railroad. “Little Mo” was purchased brand-new by the Stewartstown Railroad in 1939 to replace steam. It was used up until the 1970's when it was taken out of service. We anticipate on receiving more information from Mr. Koppenhaver soon on his new project. However, he has informed us in the meantime that after performing a thorough inspection, it's still in relatively decent shape and can be restored to operation. Stay tuned for his future report!



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## Work Weekend Report from November 13 and 14th, 2021

Provided by David Williamson

The focus of the November work-weekend was on rough spots between the water cistern (MP6.8) and the pumpkin patch (MP 6.5). In this area, we spread ballast at various locations and loose track bolts were tightened or replaced at numerous joints. We used a new cross fitting that I made up from steel 3/4-inch pipe fittings which now allows us to run 3 air tools at one time. In this case, two air tampers and the air impact wrench. In the past we would run two tampers and the air spiking hammer separately. Changing track bolts with the impact wrench is far easier than with a hand wrench at a quarter turn per pull. You can tell from the paint marks on the joint bar that it has had bolts and washers tightened or replaced in the past, but joint maintenance is an ongoing task that

the ones we have on the property. Soon, we may need to have some new ones made with proper dimensions and bolt size and spacing. That will probably be costly. Finding small rail size track fittings is very difficult as few railroads use them anymore. Chris Lutz is replacing track bolts with the air impact wrench in the photo below.



We raised two swales and ballasted and tamped a spot where the ties were pumping mud causing the train to go up and down. Chris Lutz, John Pope and Jim Tapley are using the air tampers at the pumping tie spot in the photo below.



needs done.

Historical track maintenance manuals all state that bolts should be oiled and tightened twice per year. We don't do that, but we do inspect every joint frequently during our regular track inspections. We replace bolts and washers as needed. We know that we exceed the FRA standards as we have four bolts in every joint and the standard for class I track is only one bolt. We also visually inspect the joint bars for cracks and replace them as necessary. Joint bars are the one track component that we have not been able to source easily in the used OTM market. We have been using up

We have more tamping to do on this stretch and will be scheduling that to be done on Friday Dec 3rd if the ground is not frozen. Installing ties can be tricky. The tie needs to be at the right height in the crib. Too high and there is a hump in the track, too low and there is a dip. Dips accumulate water and allow ties to pump up and down, giving a rough train ride with potential for broken rails. There is also spot tie work to do between the cis-

tern and Iron Bridge and we will try to do that over the winter if we get mild weather and unfrozen ground. We need to install roughly 100 ties per mile per year to maintain tie conditions on the track that we have in service. If we want to improve track conditions, we need to install more than that number of ties.



We have every third tie replaced on the current class I track and in many stretches every second tie. But given that all the pre 2004 ties are now rotten, that still means we have 50% to 67% defective ties. When we do slot ties, we are trying to fill in these gaps and strengthen the track, especially in curves. With 5,280 feet per mile and 30-foot rails, that is 176 rail lengths per mile. 100 ties per mile is then not even one tie per rail length!!!! An important calculation to keep in mind when thinking about the amount of work to do and the costs to do the work.



We need all the volunteers we can get to come out and help during the scheduled monthly work weekends and even our Wednesday afternoon/evening work crews. All are welcome on the all volunteer track-crew. If you would like more infor-

mation, please contact David Williamson at fairmontdave@gmail.com. We sincerely say **THANK YOU** to everyone that has donated to help purchase the ties needed to maintain the class one track and expand the length of the ride.

### Wednesday, October 14

Provided by David Williamson



On Wednesday afternoon, Jim Tapley and I went out and did some heavy tree and brush cutting along the main track west of Hopewell Township building and up to Bridge 5. We got the south rail bank cleaned off very well, the North bank rail is very overgrown with cedar trees and large hardwoods. We opened up a pretty good hole for maybe 130 feet. There is probably three hours more work on either side of where we were to get the North bank cleared back to where it should be. Then there is a stretch from Bridge 5 up to the summit at Orwig's.





We will keep working away at this as we get time, there are many other places that need this level of effort. This will allow better weed spraying next year, give us working room for tie replacement and better conditions for the rail bikes and motorcar runs. Also greater visibility for future train rides as we are hoping to be up here next year to do the bridge replacement. As always we can use more help with these efforts.

I would like to put a weekday afternoon crew together to do line inspection, light trackwork and brush cutting. If you are available and interested, please let me know. This could be a fun day out for those who have some time available during the week. Please contact me, David Williamson, at [fairmontdave@gmail.com](mailto:fairmontdave@gmail.com) if interested!

## **Stewartstown Railroad Passengers Help Keep the Train Running**

By Jim Tapley, October 17, 2021

"There's a tree on the track. Stop the train. Full stop. Full Stop," I said firmly, but as calmly as I could to Engineer Dave Collison. "I see the tree. Stopping the train," Dave replied. The air hissed as Dave expertly applied the brakes. The diesel locomotive, with three cars behind it, responded and slowed to a gentle stop. I could see from the Fireman's seat that Dave had stopped the train about 120 feet short of the obstruction on the track. As I looked closer, I saw not one, but two trees that were laying perpendicular to the track. "Dave, give me 3 step protection please," I said. "You have 3 step," Dave replied as I left the engine's cab. I climbed down the ladder and called on my radio, "Brakeman Tapley to Conductor Morgan, we stopped the train because there are trees on the track. Brakeman is off the train now. I am going to try to move the trees into the clear. Over." I heard Conductor Larry Morgan's response over the radio, "Conductor to Brakeman, understand we are stopped because of trees blocking the track and you are going to try to move them. Out."

I walked along the curve. As I got closer, I saw that the bigger of the two trees had broken into large pieces. I was able to toss the pieces of wood down the hill. Then I tried to move the long, thinner tree which was about the length of a telephone pole. No go. I couldn't move it. I called on the radio, "Brakeman to Conductor, I am not able to move this tree. Do we have a chainsaw on the train? Over." I heard the response, "Conductor to Brakeman, negative on the chainsaw. Out." Engineer Dave Collison came on the radio and said, "Engineer #10 to Brakeman, I have locked up the brakes and set the handbrake. I will come help you with the tree. Conductor, please tie down the handbrake on the caboose. Over." Conductor Larry Morgan answered, "Conductor to Engineer, caboose handbrake is secured. Understand you are going to help the Brakeman. I will stay with the train. Out."

Dave and I were able to lift the long tree off the

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tracks and move it, but we could not get the end of the tree into the clear. Up on the hill, the trunk end of the tree was wedged in between two other trees. I started thinking about possible alternatives. Using a chainsaw seemed the most obvious solution. We could shove the train back to the station and get a chainsaw. Or the Station Master might be able to use a motor car and bring us a chainsaw. But then the simplest solution hit me: Get more people! "Brakeman to Conductor, if we could get a few volunteers to help us, then we could move this tree into the clear. Over." The radio crackled immediately, "Conductor to Brakeman, some passengers heard your request. They are on their way to help."



As Dave examined the roadbed to make sure the trees had not damaged the track, I moved back towards the train to meet the volunteers. I was pleasantly surprised to see more than a dozen people heading my way, willing to help.

I showed the volunteers the tree that was fouling the track. The men lined up along the tree and lifted it easily. But they had the same issue that Dave and I had: the butt end of the tree was hung up between two other trees. So I said, "Look, if we can get more guys up the hill and lift the tree up, then we will be able to release it and turn the tree away from the track." The men were game to try it. On the count of "One, two, three" the men successfully lifted the tree up and out of the vice formed by the other trees. Then the good natured men turned the long tree so it was parallel to the track and in the clear. It was an outstanding effort by all!

"Brakeman to Conductor, the passenger volunteers have moved the tree into the clear. The Engineer has inspected the track and he says it is good. After the passengers and train crew get back on board, we will be able to proceed to the Pumpkin Patch. Over." Conductor Larry responded, "Conductor to Brakeman, that's great news that we are clear. Please thank the passengers for me. Let me know when everybody is back on board. Out." As I walked back to the train along with the passengers, I said to them, "That was an example of some good, old time railroading. A hundred years ago, they did not have chainsaws, so people must have pitched in and helped solve problems like this one. We really appreciate your help."

After we completed the run to the Pumpkin Patch and we were back at the station, Larry said to me, "Jim, will you please see to it that we have a chainsaw onboard for the rest of today's runs, just in case?" I said I would take care of that. It makes sense to use the technology that we have available to us to solve problems. But on the other hand, the greatest solution of all is when people help other people. And that is exactly what the passengers did on that run of the Pumpkin Patch train on October 17, 2021!

**Thank you,  
Volunteers &  
Supporters!**



# Pumpkin Trains 2021

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# Santa Trains 2021

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## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL

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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**  
Show your membership card and receive a \$2.00 discount on up to four (4) Stewartstown Railroad train tickets, courtesy of the Stewartstown Railroad Company.
- ☐ **Corporate Membership (business/organizational)** ..... **\$300.00**  
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.)

- ☐ **Optional: Check here to receive only electronic copy of "7.4" newsletter**
- 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 volunteer's efforts help the railroad continue its operations over its 7.4 miles of track between Stewartstown and New Freedom, Pa., via the Deer Creek Valley. The Friends organization is a Pennsylvania non-stock, not-for-profit 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.

Please send completed form and check to:

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

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