

# THE *Cincinnation*

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE CINCINNATI CHAPTER • NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Vol. 55, No. 1

Visit our Library at 10 Village Square, Glendale, OH 45246

January 2026

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hello everyone! Happy New Year! Here are a few highlights of recent Chapter activities and news.

This is our first issue of *The Cincinnation* for 2026. This month we catch up on Steam News on Pages 2 and 3, and remember our Members Harry Noble and Mike Thompson on Pages 4 and 5. We are always looking for fresh material to provide news and information of interest to our readers. If you have taken a trip, read a book, or pursued any activity you would like to share, we encourage you to submit articles for future issues.

In National news, plans are underway for a Spring Conference in Ogden, UT, in May, and a Fall Conference/Convention in Central Ohio in September. Two sessions of RailCamp are planned for this summer

We are still accepting Chapter dues for 2026, and they are \$25 which includes all family members at the same address. At last report we have 65 percent of our members renewed. Donations are always appreciated and form an important part of our annual budget. As a 501(c)(3) tax exempt non-profit organization, donations to the Chapter are tax deductible to the maximum extent permitted by law. National dues renewals are handled separately, and instructions were sent to all members on how to renew.

Please keep the articles and photographs coming – we can always use fresh material for *The Cincinnation*.

We still need help with our website and our social media. Please contact me or Frank Kammer if you can help.

This month, longtime Chapter Member, and noted rail photographer and historian, Dan Finfrock, will present our first program of the year. See the next column for details.

That's all for now. I'll see you at the meeting!

Scott Andes, President



## JANUARY MEETING

Our Chapter Meeting on Tuesday, January 27<sup>th</sup>, will be held at our Chapter Library, 10 Village Square, Glendale, Ohio, 45246, at 7:00 p.m. This month, longtime Chapter Member Dan Finfrock will be presenting our program. Dan's program will actually feature 2 fairly short programs focusing on Swiss Railroads photographed during his international travels. One portion of his program will cover one of his favorite railfan locations in Switzerland, while the other will cover 3 railroad towns in the non-Alpine region of Switzerland. Dan is one of our best storytellers and photographers, so you won't want to miss this program!!

Our Library is located at 10 Village Square, which is on the square at the south end of the oval and southwest of the Glendale Station. Parking is available along the streets near the Library and in a small lot behind the Library (accessible from the nearby alley). As always, guests are welcome so please spread the word and bring a friend. The business portion of the meeting starts at 7:00 p.m. with the program to follow. We hope you will make plans to join us!

## THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS

This month we send our thoughts and prayers to the families Chapter Members Mike Thompson and Harry Noble, who passed away in late December. Both were former Chapter Officers and very active in guiding our Chapter operations.

Please report the passing or serious illness of any member to Frank Kammer.

Scott Andes, Chapter President



## STEAM NEWS By John Biehn

Nashville Steam Update...After years of dedicated restoration efforts and a continued fundraising drive, historic Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis Railway steam locomotive No. 576 has successfully passed a major milestone in its return to steam: its hydrostatic test. This essential verification confirms that the boiler, after completion of major repairs, is sound under pressure, bringing the 4-8-4 steam locomotive one critical step closer to full operation. "The hydrostatic test means that No. 576 is very close to reawakening, just in time to take part in a once-in-a-generation moment, as our country celebrates its 250<sup>th</sup> birthday next year, and also 200 years of American railroading in 2027. This locomotive represents not only Nashville's proud past, but a living symbol of our nation's resilience, ingenuity, and heritage on the move," said Shane Meador, President of Nashville Steam Preservation Society. With the hydrostatic test completed, the path is now cleared for a major flurry of reassembly work and additional tests. The next major milestone will be a stationary steam test, followed by final assembly and its first test runs in more than sixty years. While preparing the locomotive for its first steam test, a new challenge emerged. Upon removal and inspection, unexpected repairs were discovered in the locomotive's superheater units, which convert water into the high temperature steam that powers the engine. Several of these elements now require replacement through a custom mill run of new material - a specialized process estimated to cost approximately \$45,000. To help meet this need and keep the project on schedule, Nashville Steam has launched an end-of-year Matching Campaign to raise funds toward the fabrication and installation of these critical components. All donations will be doubled up to \$25,000, thanks to the generosity of a supporting foundation. Donations can be made by going to <https://www.nashvillesteam.org/donate>.

Alaska 557 News...On November 8, 2025, Alaska Railroad No. 557 was fired up for the first time in more than sixty years. "The locomotive's rebuild is now 95% complete," said Patrick Durand, 557 Restoration Company President. No. 557 was fired up for five hours with fuel supplied by Republic Services, who has agreed to donate fuel for the locomotive's first two years of operation. Alaska 557 was built by the Baldwin Locomotive Works for the U.S. Army Transportation Corps. During World War 2, twelve S-160s locomotives were transferred for service in Alaska to relieve an acute motive power shortage. The Alaskan twelve were modified for the northern climate with larger compound air compressors mounted on the front pilot, steam coils to heat the cab, and snow plows. In 1954, when No. 557 became the final steam locomotive on the roster, it was converted from coal fired to oil burning. The locomotive became the last Alaska Railroad steam engine due to a diesel shortcoming. The area around Nenana, Alaska, suffers from regular flooding along the Tanana and Nenana Rivers. The railroad's new diesel-electric locomotives had trouble navigating flooded tracks as their traction motors would short out. No. 557 was found to easily ford water up to two feet over the rails. Aside from flood duty, No. 557 pulled an occasional special event train. The last train it pulled before being retired was a run from Anchorage to the state fair in Palmer on September 5, 1959. A few years later, in 1964, a Washington scrap dealer and museum owner, Monte Holm, purchased No. 557. Instead of scrapping the locomotive, Holm preserved it for

school groups to witness steam engine history in action. Upon his passing, Holm's museum at Moses Lake, Washington, was closed and the 557 had no caretaker. In 2011, Jim & Vic Janssen, owners of several Alaska-based transportation companies, purchased the locomotive from the Holm's estate, ensuring its return to Alaska. The Jansens then donated the locomotive to the Alaska Railroad, stipulating that it be relocated to Anchorage, rehabilitated, and put back in service. The Alaska Railroad arranged for No. 557 to be moved home, arriving at Whittier on January 3, 2012. Since that time, the Engine 557 Restoration Company, a non-profit group established to restore, maintain, and operate the locomotive, has been working on its rebuild. The next steps in No. 557's rebuild include: Installing the brake rigging, which has been rebuilt. Relining the cross-head guides with new bearing bronze, leading to valve gear assembly and rod installation. Fitting and painting the new boiler jacket. Reflecting on the test firing milestone, Mr. Durand could not emphasize enough the volunteer effort. "I really credit and recognize the all-volunteer 557 Mechanical Department crew that got us to this point," he said. For more information on this project, go to <https://557.alaskarails.org>. (Thanks to Bob Lettenberger, Trains.com)

Cosmetic Restoration in Delaware...The Lewes Junction Railroad & Bridge Association has announced that the historic steam locomotive No. 60, initially built for the Pennsylvania Railroad, is going to be restored for display in Lewes with the goal of it being ready for next summer. Historic steam locomotive No. 60, a 0-6-0 PRR class B6sa, was built in 1913 and once operated the railroads in Lewes. The locomotive will be disassembled and prepared at the Wilmington & Western Railroad and then taken to Lewes for onsite cosmetic reassembly and painting. When restored, the goal is to make the locomotive look as close to the way it looked over 100 years ago. David Ludlow is on the board of directors with the Lewes Junction Railroad & Bridge Association. He stated, "It happens to be the last known example of its particular wheel arrangement and boiler arrangement that still exists. So we have the last of this configuration and it's very important that we protect it, preserve it, interpret it, and bring it into town for everybody to see." Ludlow adds this project is a big step in preserving the town's railroading heritage, and it will also enhance public understanding of the country's industrial past. "Our focus is now as part of the town of Lewes's 250<sup>th</sup> celebration next year, we hope to have locomotive No. 60 as one of the big crown jewels and big showpieces for that 250<sup>th</sup> celebration of the United State of America," said Ludlow. For the restoration, LJRBA partnered with national railroad services provider FMW Solutions. FMW has a dedicated cosmetic restoration team and FMW has a reputation for quality work in heritage preservation. (Thanks to Joe Irizarry, Delaware Public Media. via Tom Schultz)

Future Long Island Steam...Long Island Railroad No. 35 is a G5s 4-6-0 built by the Pennsylvania Railroad's Juniata Shops in 1928. For decades, this locomotive traveled across New York City and Long Island. Since the 1990s, the caretakers of locomotive No. 35 have been a small group of passionate volunteers making sure she's been saved from scrap and keeping her home on Long Island at the Oyster (Continues on Page 3)

## STEAM NEWS (Continued)

Bay Railroad Museum. Here is an update on the locomotive's restoration. Contract work with Next Generation Rail Solutions in Kentucky continues with the conversion of the tender trucks from friction bearings to roller bearings. In the future months ahead, a lot of the larger components that are being worked on in Kentucky will be shipped back to Oyster Bay and workers can finally start a large scale reassembly of the locomotive. In the coming weeks, the museum anticipates that the drive wheels will be heading to the Age of Steam in Ohio, where specialized lathes are available for crank pin turning and work of that nature. The museum also anticipates that their contractor will be making a visit in the next couple of months to do some work on the locomotive's frame. At the museum, volunteers have been hard at work on the tender doing needle scaling work on the tender tank in preparation for eventual reassembly. This scaling has largely focused on the coal end of the tender. The museum anticipates that the tender components will be reassembled in advance of the actual locomotive, at least the trucks and the frame. The museum is still actively fundraising for the locomotive. They operate off grant money from the town of Oyster Bay and Nassau County for most of the funding, but there are still lots of expenses that are not covered, mainly trucking and rigging. Please consider a donation by going to <https://www.gofundme.com/f/support-the-reassembly-of-lIRR-steam-locomotive-35>. (Thanks to Ronnie Schnepf)

C&NW1385 News...The Mid-Continent Railway Museum, after nearly thirty years of work, has completed a successful test firing of former Chicago & Northwestern 4-6-0 No. 1385. The test occurred on December 4. The locomotive now moves into the final phases of its restoration with plans to have the locomotive operational by summer 2026. Locomotive No. 1385 was built by the American Locomotive Company in March, 1907. It was among 325 R1 class locomotives on the C&NW. No. 1385 and its sisters worked across the C&NW system. In addition to freight assignments, the R1s were tasked with moving secondary passenger trains, switching local industries from Michigan's Upper Peninsula to the Dakotas, and working around Chicago. The C&NW retired the 1385 in 1956. The locomotive was acquired by the Mid-Continent Railway Museum in 1961 for its scrap value of \$2,600. No. 1385 powered trains during the museum's first operating season in 1963. Before 1385 returns to lead the museum's trains, there is work yet to be completed. Pistons, rings, the remaining valve gear, and rods need to be installed. No. 1385 will receive new pistons. Insulation needs to be applied to the boiler along with a new boiler jacket, which will require painting. Having the new boiler jacket cut and fit to the locomotive is a significant expense in completing the project. There is plumbing and electrical work to be finished as well. After these steps, test runs will be made along with seeking final certification from the Federal Railroad Administration. The museum has set July 4, 2026, as its target date to have No. 1385 ready for operation. To complete the restoration, the museum indicates that it needs an additional \$300,000. As of November 26, 4% of that goal has been realized. For more information on the Mid-Continent railway Museum, or to make a donation to 1385's restoration, go to <https://www.midcontinent.org>.

Pere Marquette 1225...A history lesson...Before it became a beloved and famous holiday train, the Pere Marquette 1225 spent many years parked near Spartan Stadium at Michigan State University. The imposing black steam engine captured the attention of countless passersby, including a young Chris Van Allsburg, who visited the campus as a child to attend MSU football games. Years later, those memories of the iconic locomotive inspired his award-winning children's book "The Polar Express." Since 1988, the Steam Railroading Institute has operated the North Pole Express, offering seasonal train rides pulled by the original Pere Marquette 1225 steam engine, fired up each year to make the journey from Owosso to Ashley, Michigan. The Pere Marquette 1225 was built by the Lima Locomotive Works in 1941. It shuttled wartime freight between Detroit, Saginaw, and Flint and northern Indiana steel mills until its retirement in 1951. The steam engine ended up in a scrap yard in New Buffalo until Forest Akers, a MSU trustee, campaigned for the engine to be donated to the university as a monument to the Age of Steam and as a subject of study for engineering students. The locomotive then became a silent show piece on campus, standing near Spartan Stadium from 1957 to 1985. During this time, the locomotive could be admired on campus and, in 1969, a group of MSU students formed the university's railroad club to preserve and restore the steam engine. When Aarne Frobom enrolled at MSU, he already knew about the locomotive. Frobom was a model railroading hobbyist fascinated by old machines of all sorts. That fall, he attended a MSU railroad club meeting and signed on to the project of reviving the 1225. He hasn't stopped working on the locomotive since. That day, he met Randy Paquette and Steve Reeves, two former MSU students who still work on the North Pole Express trips to this day. In 1979, the Michigan State Trust for Railway Preservation was formed to raise money to make the train operational again. Frobom recalls a favorite memory from 1980, when the fence around the engine was demolished in order to reconnect the track to the railroad spur that entered the campus. "With an earth mover, we moved the 1225 for the first time since 1957," says Frobom. "That's when we knew the engine would really be leaving the campus and returning to the railroad system." Restoration continued in Owosso. The revitalized steam engine returned to the rails transporting passengers in 1988, when it made its first 17-mile trip between Owosso and St. Charles, operated by the Steam Railroading Institute. Today, train enthusiasts and those celebrating the holiday season can climb aboard the train each November and December. Departing from the Steam Railroading Institute in Owosso, the Pere Marquette 1225 - renamed the North Pole Express - makes a four and a half hour round trip to the village of Ashley's Country Christmas, where carnival rides, photo opportunities, and Santa Claus await visitors young and old. Coming in at a length of over 100 feet and 400 tons in weight, Pere Marquette 1225's coal-powered engine runs at 3,000 horsepower and takes eight hours to fire up with a team of 10 to 15 people. It's a real labor of love. The Pere Marquette 1225 is a much loved train ride and a unique opportunity to experience a World War 2 era feat of engineering while celebrating the holiday season with loved ones. (Thanks to Siska Lyssens and Deon Foster, Michigan State University)



## HARRELL V. "HARRY" NOBLE II

February 4, 1937 - December 22, 2025



## WILLIAM MICHAEL THOMPSON

September 15, 1947 - December 17, 2025



Harrell Vaun "Harry" Noble, II, 88, of Xenia, passed away Monday, December 22, 2025, at Kettering Medical Center. He was born February 4, 1937, in Camden, New Jersey, the son of H. V. and Rosalind Wilson Noble. He was raised in Cincinnati and then Xenia, where he became a farm boy. He graduated from Xenia High School and got his undergrad and graduate degrees from the University of Dayton in mechanical engineering. He started his career at Wright Patt, then worked at Chemineer, various contracting jobs, and retired from WS Electronics.

He met his wife, Mary Ann, on a blind date. The 2 farm kids fell in love and were married on June 13, 1964. They were blessed with 2 children, Pam and Phil. He was an active member of Xenia United Presbyterian Church. In his retirement, he was a docent at Carillon Park and EnterTRAINment Junction. He also taught classes at Southern State College.

He loved trains!! He had many train layouts, went to train shows, and loved to just sit at train tracks and watch trains go by. This was a passion he shared with both his son and his grandson. He also belonged to several train organizations. He was an active Ham Radio Operator, a passion he shared with his parents, his sister, and even his daughter and son-in-law. N8CYS is now a silent key. He loved to write. He wrote and published many articles and books. He also loved dogs, both his own and his granddogs, whom he often dog sat for. His most beloved was Colby, a large, yellow lab.

He is survived by a daughter, Pam (Steve) Lubbers, a son, Phil (Anne) Noble, two grandchildren, Josie and Keegan, a sister, Linda (Chris) Joseph, by several nieces and nephews, and by many close friends. He was preceded in death by his parents, his wife, Mary Ann, on June 10, 2025, and by a sister, Nancy Hanna. Harry was a sweet, loving, caring man and will be greatly missed by all who knew and loved him. A celebration of life will be held at 11am, Friday, January 2, at Xenia United Presbyterian Church, with Rev. Mike Wakeland officiating. Visitation will be held at the church from 10am Friday until service time. Burial will be held in South Salem Cemetery. In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to the Xenia United Presbyterian Church, 343 W. Ankeny MillRd., Xenia, OH, 45385, in his memory. Condolences may be made to the family at [www.NeeldFuneralHome.com](http://www.NeeldFuneralHome.com).

William Michael "Mickey" Thompson raced into the arms of his beloved mother, Annie, on the afternoon of December 17th, 2025, surrounded by his family and closest friends. Mike was 78 years young when he left us, but the light left by his full and vibrant life will continue to shine for generations.

Mike was born on September 15th, 1947, to Annie McManus, a true Scot, and his father, Richard Shelby Thompson, in Wilmington, Ohio. He lived in Scotland as a young lad from 1957 -1958, even playing at Edinburgh Castle. He was the Student Council President and a member of the first-ever graduating class of Carroll High School in 1965. He enlisted in 1969 and served in the Army through 1971. Mike was a creative soul and always dreamed of being an artist, though he thought he might not make any money that way, so he went to Law School instead. He graduated at the top of his class in 1991. He spent over 30 years practicing law and helping those who couldn't help themselves. He worked in Contracting at Wright Patterson AFB and retired in 2008 after 36 years.

He fell into a deep love with auto racing as a young man and spent his days, weekends, and all the loot he had on racing, building cars, and chasing the high speed dream of winning. He and his team, Bagatelle Racing, raced in NASCAR at many tracks, including Daytona and Talladega. In 1974, they attempted to race in the Indy 500, but the car wasn't up to the task. He was a member of race groups such as VARC, BARC, and served as Director of Winchester Old Timers. When he wasn't racing, he posted stories on his website, Dayton Speedway Lives. His love of racing was lifelong, and he took a final victory lap in his blue Bagatelle sprint car in June 2024.

Mike, aka Mickey, was a true clown and spent a lot of his weekends clowning around at festivals, parades, hospitals, and Special Wish events. He loved facepainting, making balloon animals, and making people smile. He always said he wanted to run away and join the circus, and a few times he did. He loved the history and artistry of being a clown. He co-founded Giggles and Grins, a local Clown Alley in Fairborn, Ohio, to organize enough clowns to entertain many events around the community. He also taught an adult class at the local high school on weeknights called The Klown Kollege of Komedy Knowledge, where he taught the art of clowning, face painting, magic, and even let his young clown (Continues on Page 5)

## **WILLIAM MICHAEL THOMPSON (Continued)**

daughter, Scooter, teach everyone how to make balloon animals.

Mike was a master storyteller. His stories and jokes were so elaborate, perfectly timed, and spoken so eloquently that you couldn't help but sit on the edge of your seat with what he might say next. He always had a way with words and some of the stories were actually true; we're just not sure which ones. You could fill a museum and library with all the oddities and books that Mike collected. Clown figurines, history books, and racing memorabilia, to name a few. He also had a taxidermy frog mariachi band for the sole reason that he kept finding another one at the flea market. He needed the band to be complete and thought someone must be making these things so he kept buying them. He loved searching for treasures at flea markets for things he "couldn't live without".

After retiring, his love of service continued. He volunteered his time and talent in organizations all across the Miami Valley. From being Santa at Carillon Park to giving Underground Railroad tours in downtown Springboro. He also served as the President of the Springboro Historical Society from 2019-2023. He assisted a site called "Racers at Rest," where he raised money to buy headstones for past auto racing drivers who didn't have one. He managed to raise money to give many racers headstones over the years.

His love of the arts continued and led him to be a tap dancer for 28 years at Miami Valley Dance Center in Fairborn, Ohio. He performed in many shows over those years. He took up the violin at the age of 70 solely because he could. His young spirit defied doctors' typical treatment when he was diagnosed in September of 2024 with acute myeloid leukemia.

And even after all of the spectacular accomplishments and wild adventures, the greatest love of Mike's life was his family. He and his bride, Cris, spent the last 29 years sharing in love and laughter. His daughters, Melissa, Cristina, and Shelbe, were the highlight of his life and if you knew Mike, you knew he thought he was the most blessed man in the world because of his daughters. Mike was also blessed by his 9 grandchildren, who filled his days with joy and also served as an endless outlet of people who've never heard all of his jokes. Isabella, Sean, Brandon, Dillon, Lucy, Pearl, Marigold, Duke, and Rudy were to him, "Angels that fallen down from Heaven".

Mike is preceded in death by his parents, Annie McManus and Richard Shelby Thompson, his brother, Rhett, daughter, Ann Michael, and long-time friends, Charlie Dean and Ron Titus. He is survived by his loving wife, Cristina Hernandez Thompson, his one and only sister, Patricia (Jeff) Jones, his loving daughters, Melissa (Brian) Donovan, Cristina (Brad) Gibson,

Shelbe (Steven) Lane, niece and family, Kellialexis McManus, Annie McManus and Max Joos, and his grandchildren, Isabella, Dillon, Brandon, Sean, Lucy, Pearl, Marigold, Duke, and Rudy.

Mike always promised his daughters he would live forever, a wild promise he would later come to say. But as it turns out, he will live forever. He'll live on in his loved ones, children, grandchildren, many friends, gear heads, bibliophiles, history buffs, and anyone he made smile over his full 78 years. There could never be another like William Michael "Mickey" Thompson, and frankly, there never will be. Next time you sip a margarita, see a race car, a clown in the circus, a magic show, or a taxidermied reptile, you should think of Mike and smile and know you're never too old to try something new. To quote him on one of his final days, "Thank you all who have made my life so wonderful...Go and enjoy each and every day you are given."

A Celebration of Life will be held on Sunday, February 8th, 2026 at Rosewood Manor, 650 Benner Rd. Miamisburg, OH at 1pm. Food and drinks will be provided. Dress code is Hawaiian shirts or bright colors. To RSVP, please text 937-272-4248.



## THE CINCINNATIAN STAFF

Editor:



Scott Andes  
3585 Miller Road  
Springfield, OH 45502  
(937) 325-5363  
wandes@msn.com

### Staff:

Report Member  
Illness to:

Frank Kammer  
1706 Marilyn Lane  
Cincinnati, OH 45231  
(513) 729-1919  
fpk3rd@gmail.com

Report address changes to: Frank Kammer  
1706 Marilyn Lane  
Cincinnati, OH 45231  
(513) 729-1919  
fpk3rd@gmail.com

Chapter Website: [www.cincinnatichapternrhs.com](http://www.cincinnatichapternrhs.com)

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## NEWSLETTER PRINTED BY



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NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY  
**P.O. BOX 62023**  
Cincinnati, OH 45262-0023

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### JANUARY

Tue. Jan. 27 Regular Chapter Meeting & Program 7:00 P.M.  
Chapter Library, 10 Village Sq., Glendale, OH

### FEBRUARY

Sat. Feb. 14 St. Andrew Model Train Show  
St. Andrew Parish Center, Milford, Ohio  
Hours 9:30 A.M. to 2:00 P.M.

Tue. Feb. 24 Regular Chapter Meeting & Program 7:00 P.M.  
Chapter Library, 10 Village Sq., Glendale, OH

## CHAPTER ACTIVITIES OUR FIRST CHRISTMAS SEASON IN OUR NEW HOME!



After many successful and prosperous years at EnterTRAINment Junction, we now celebrate our first successful and prosperous year at our new home in the Village of Glendale. Photo by Richard King.