

# Boyertown

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Life



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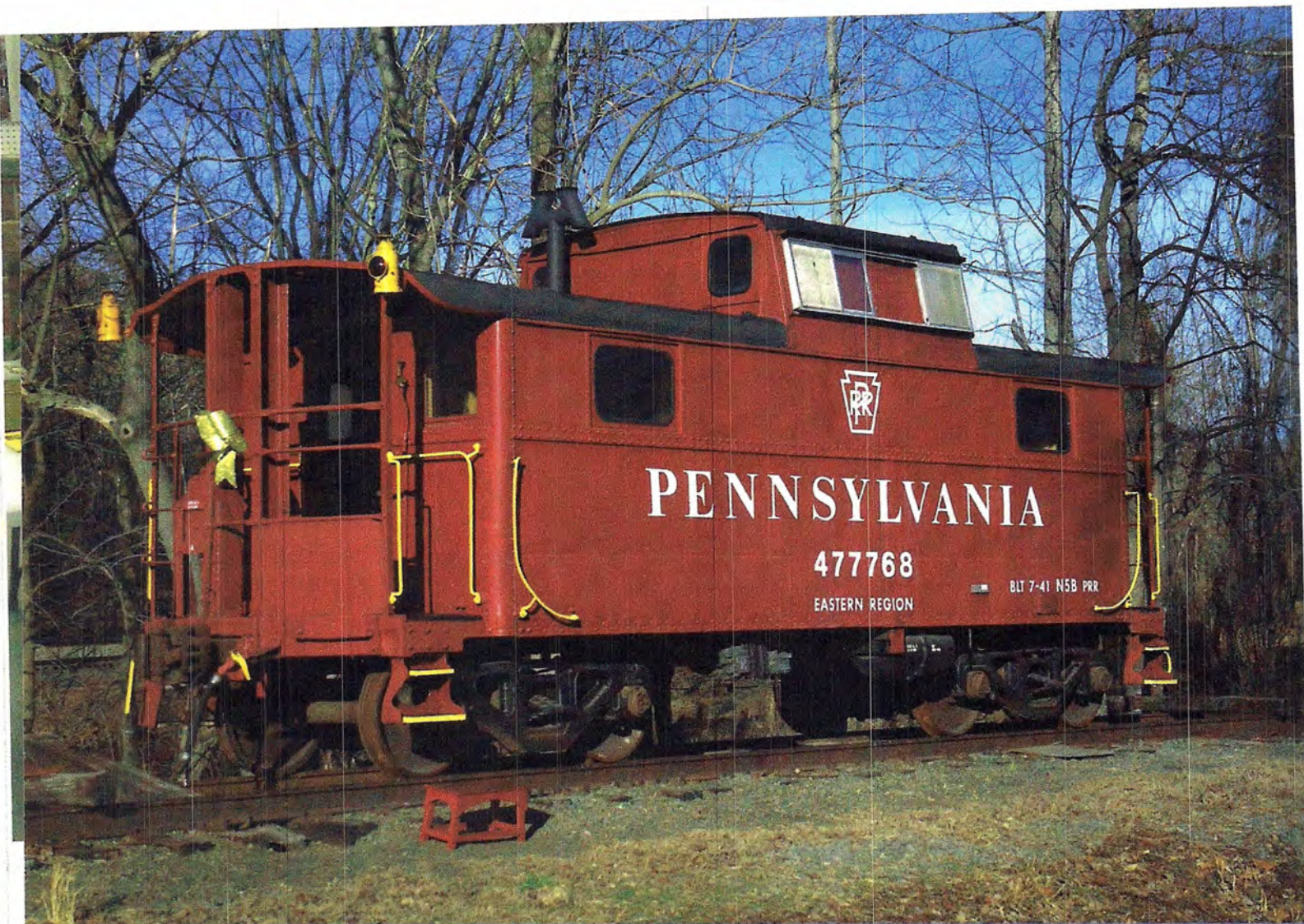
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March 2014

## History Comes to Life

Boyertown's Rails, Dales and Ghost Tales





**Cabin Car  
#477768**

Those working to bring back the Colebrookdale Railroad added a piece of the puzzle late last year, as they obtained "cabin car #477758," and a piece of American rail history.

Photo courtesy of the Colebrookdale Railroad Preservation Trust

## Rail Tail: Colebrookdale Gets Caboose

*Courtesy of The Colebrookdale Railroad Preservation Trust*

**T**hanks to the leadership and generosity of Boyertown's Lions Club and Rotary Club, a relic from the golden age of Pennsylvania's railroading past is coming home—home to Boyertown and the Colebrookdale Railroad.

Pennsylvania Railroad (PRR) cabin car #477768 (known as a "caboose" on other railroads) was built in Altoona in 1941. For the last six years, members of the Rivanna Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society (NRHS) have been restoring it at a location in Virginia, far from the car's home. Now, thanks to the Rotary and Lions Club, it will become the first piece of equipment for the nonprofit Colebrookdale Railroad Preservation Trust, headquartered in Boyertown.

"The caboose is an attraction in and of itself. Of the tens of thousands that once roamed the rails of the nation, only a small fraction survive in use," said Nathaniel Guest, Trust president.



The Trust has been diligently planning for the creation of a tourist passenger and freight operation on the caboose's new home line, the Colebrookdale Railroad, as told in the January issue of Boyertown Life. Passenger operations are slated to begin in the fall of 2014. Running through the beautiful and forgotten Secret Valley between Boyertown and Pottstown, the railroad connects the oldest iron making sites in the nation.

"The Colebrookdale Railroad is one of the most exciting projects to come to our area in some time, and while it will take a number of years to develop, the caboose's return is a great first step," said Roger Lehmann, past president of the Boyertown Lions Club. "A caboose ride is a rare treat, made all the more special by the beauty and history of the Colebrookdale."

"We could not be more pleased to support the railroad and its economic and community development goals," said Charles Haddad, past president of the Boyertown Rotary Club. "One of the strengths of the Colebrookdale is that it builds on businesses and attractions that are already here. When the train arrives in town, its passengers will be looking for places to shop, to visit, to eat, and to stay."

The dedication of the Rotary and Lions Clubs to the Boyertown community was the critical factor in the caboose owner's decision to allow the caboose to come home.

"The Rivanna Chapter was considering a number of new homes for the caboose and we were up against some tough competition. We were, in fact, the only location where there was not already an up-and-running tourist railroad," said Guest.

"It was clear to us there is a strong community commitment to making the Colebrookdale Railroad a central theme in the continuing revitalization of Boyertown and Pottstown," said John Pfaltz, one of the caboose's restoration team leaders. "That meant a great deal to us."

The NRHS Rivanna Chapter hosted a farewell ceremony at the caboose in Red Hill, Va., on Dec. 19, 2013. Chapter members, friends, and families attended the event along with dignitaries from the Lions and Rotary Clubs, the Colebrookdale Railroad Preservation Trust, and the NRHS national organization. Several local media organizations covered the ceremony, where the "Keys to the Cabin Car" were handed off to the Colebrookdale Railroad Preservation Trust, the Rotary Club, and the Lions Club.

The caboose has left its Red Hill, Va., siding for two brief trips: in 2010 it went to Steamtown in Scranton, where it was on display, and in 2012 it went to Harrisburg to be displayed at the Amtrak station. These moves were made possible by Norfolk Southern, which picked up and delivered the caboose. This time, however, the move will be for good.

Until the 1980s, all freight trains had the familiar red of the caboose at the rear end. Usually a conductor, brakeman and flagman rode there; it became their home away from home. Consequently, the local N5b caboose has a work table, bunks, ice box, sink with running water, toilet, and potbellied coal stove. All have been restored (except the toilet) to way they were when #477768 was first built in July 1941 in the PRR shops in Altoona, Pa.

A caboose was a complex living organism. But, modern technology has made this all unnecessary and today the caboose has been replaced by just a flashing red light! On the Colebrookdale Railroad, these aspects of 20th century railway



The Virginia-based caboose restoration crew pause for a photo during the Ceremony to hand off the "Keys to the Cabin Car." Photo courtesy of the Colebrookdale Railroad Preservation Trust



Rich Tobin of the Colebrookdale Railroad Preservation Trust and Roger Lehmann of the Boyertown Lions Club inspect the caboose. Photo courtesy of the Colebrookdale Railroad Preservation Trust

life will come alive once more for tourists as they ride in the caboose on busy weekends.

Currently, the Colebrookdale Railroad Preservation Trust is raising funds for equipment and operations and encourages you to become a member, donate, sponsor a piece of the railroad, or volunteer. Go online at [colebrookdalerrailroad.com](http://colebrookdalerrailroad.com).

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