

Trains and Troops
Strasburg, PA

On 2-3 November 2024, the Army Ground Forces Association (AGFA) supported the Pennsylvania Railroad Museum during the annual "Trains and Troops" event. This unique event chronicles the use of railroads throughout American military history from the Civil War to the present day.

The members of AGFA who participated in the event were Donna Cusano, Paul Cusano, Daniel & Rochelle Fortak, John Uhler, Gary and Deanna Weaver, Shawn Welch and our guest Becky Webb.

The educational objective was to provide interpretation of the oft-forgotten and overlooked missions of the U.S. Army's Coast Artillery railway guns; railroad-based medical operations, general railroad support during the World War Two and World War One periods and the critical morale support provided by the Chaplains of the military in all wars throughout American history.

The Pennsylvania RR Museum features a very extensive collection of excellently preserved locomotives and rolling stock within its main building. Interpreters for the Trains and Troops event set up exhibits directly in the museum proper, with the rail cars and engines as a historic back drop. The photo below shows many of our participating membership and friends on Saturday, 2 November.



The event started on Saturday morning at 1000 hours with a briefing by the Museum Director and volunteer coordinator. Below the various organization leaders are listening intently to the days instructions.



While the meeting was going on, we were setting up our displays. Below 2LT Webb is setting up the "Medical Train" displays.



Below are more of the medical displays.



A medical China place setting is below.



Another view of the medical displays from a big wider angle.



Below is the beginning of the "medical bed" interpretation.



The military chaplaincy display covered about a 30 foot area. Below are the main charts outlining the history of military chaplains.



Additional ecclesiastical materials are shown below to include communion sets.



Below the field organ is played by Mr. Greg Miller.



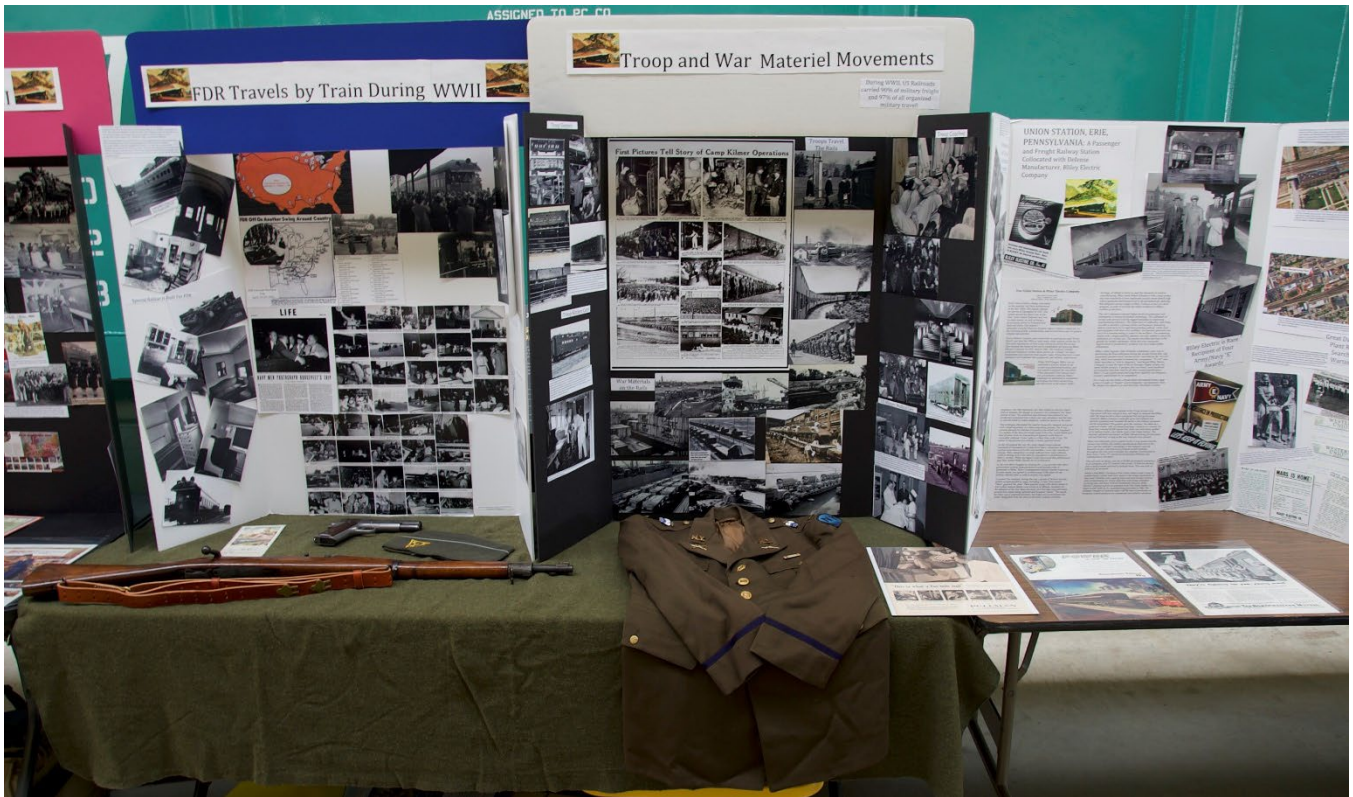
Additional chaplaincy items are shown below to include a recent articles regarding military chaplains in Vietnam.



The display below, developed by members Rochelle and Dan Fortak, provides a detailed history of Rail Road company support to the WWII war effort in Pennsylvania. SGT Cusano is deeply engrossed in one of the panels.



The panels below outline the movements of President Roosevelt by rail and the movement of soldiers and materials by rail.



Below are additional panels in the display.



...and another set of detailed panels.



And more information on the operations of US railroads during WWII.



The panels below address railroad security during WWII.



The display below addresses the Army's Railway Artillery which was managed and manned by the Coast Artillery Corps.



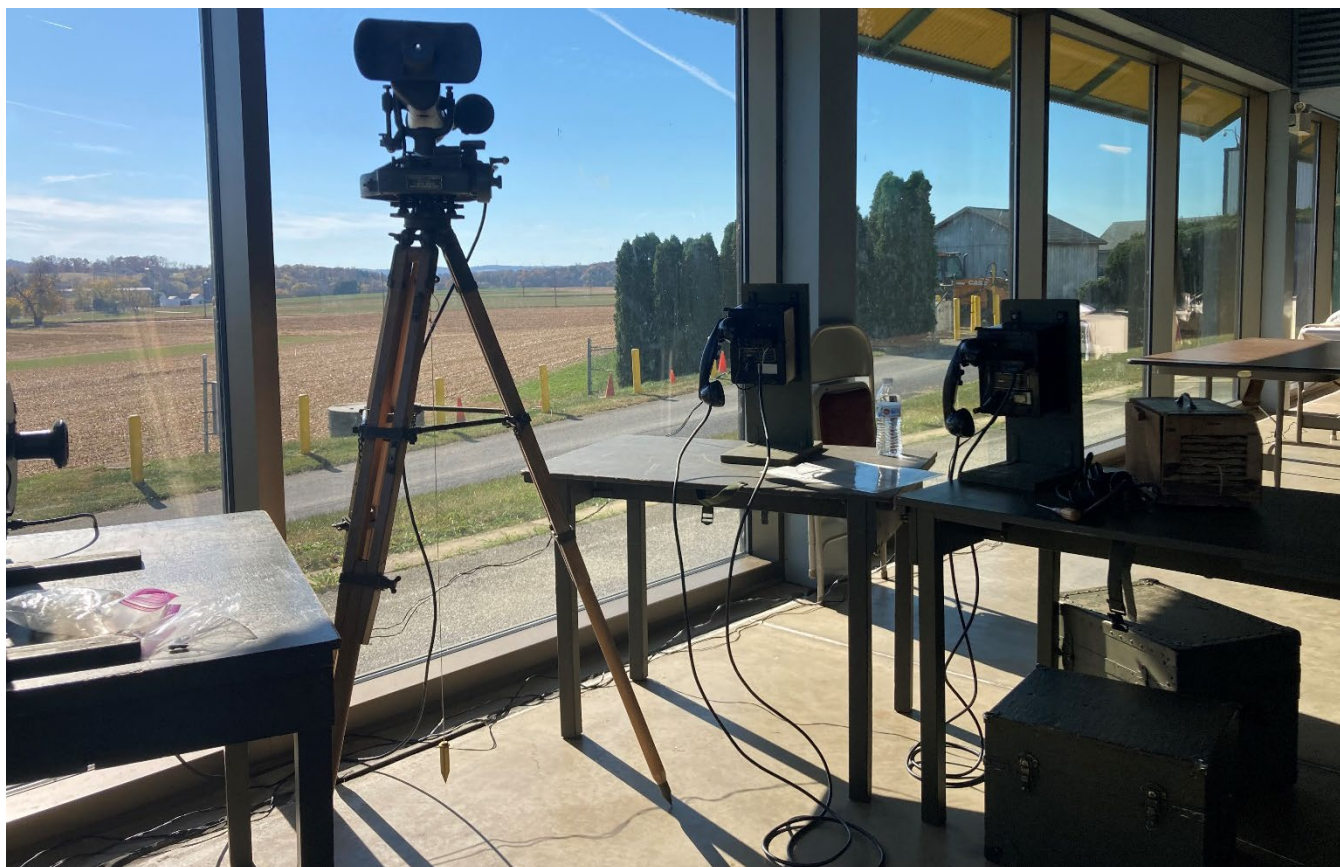
The display below covers several railway artillery topics. A detailed panel of photos of railway artillery fire control personnel on the left, an M1905 Deflection Board in the center and ammunition charts on the right.



Below shows the ammunition chart in the center, a 75mm shell with point detonating fuse, an I-166 VoltOhm meter and a BD-71 telephone switchboard.



The center of this photo shows an M1910A1 Azimuth instrument and two EE-91 telephones.



Another view of the back of the M1910A1 Azimuth instrument. This instrument is used to spot ships (targets) for the railway artillery.



This next photo is a view from the M1910A1 at a hill about 12 miles distant.



Saturday evening the Railroad Museum hosted a swing dance and everyone had a great time.



We managed to get a table for our group at dance and Dan and Rochelle Fortak were able to grab a bite to eat between music sets.



“The Moonlighters” were an outstanding selection by the Museum and they provided outstanding dance music for the evening.



Another view of guests enjoying the music and “cutting the rug”.



One of the best aspects of the evening is the ability to walk the museum and see the outstanding work of the staff. The Pullman "Lotos Club" car is most intriguing.





The photo below shows the interior of the Lotos Club car - quite opulent!



The axel and wheels below are a demonstration of the forces of nature.




The sign below outlines the forces of nature that bent the axel during the Johnstown Flood of 1889.



Johnstown Flood Wheels 1886-1887

The 1889 Johnstown Flood was a catastrophic natural disaster that resulted in the deaths of 2,209 people and damages of \$17 million. The Flood was also costly for the railroads, which had over 300 freight cars, 18 passenger cars, 33 locomotives, 50 miles of track, and several structures: railroad bridges, a roundhouse, and other related buildings damaged or destroyed. Despite the devastation, rail service was restored within two weeks.

Supposedly, these wheels were discovered in 1957 during excavation for a new building in Johnstown, Pennsylvania. It is presumed that they were buried by the Flood.



Two Pennsylvania RR locomotives swept away by the floodwaters of May 31, 1889

(RRMPA Gen Neg 26116)

One of the most interesting cars was the railroad “break training” car.



The two description signs below outline what the car was used for - specifically it enabled the railroad to send out a “mobile classroom” throughout the rail network to provide needed and timely training.

A HANDS-ON LEARNING LAB

In order to instruct their engineers, trainmen, conductors, and locomotive hostlers in the proper operation of air brake systems, the Pennsylvania Railroad gave each employee a copy of *Brake and Train Air Signal Instructions No. 99-D-1*. This book contained all rules employees had to know, and it was stamped after completion of instruction and testing. Employees were required to carry a copy of No. 99-D-1 while on duty to document their proficiency with the operation of air brake systems.

An air brake instruction car was set up like a classroom, with a row of wooden folding chairs running along each side of the car. The instructor showed movies, slides, or colored instructional charts from the front of the car. The instructor could also provide hands-on training with cutaways and working examples of air brake systems on either side of the car: passenger cars on the left and freight cars on the right. In the front of the car, there were examples of several working air brake systems that were color coded to match the instructional charts. Under the floor, there was enough piping to simulate how the air brakes responded on a fifty-car train.

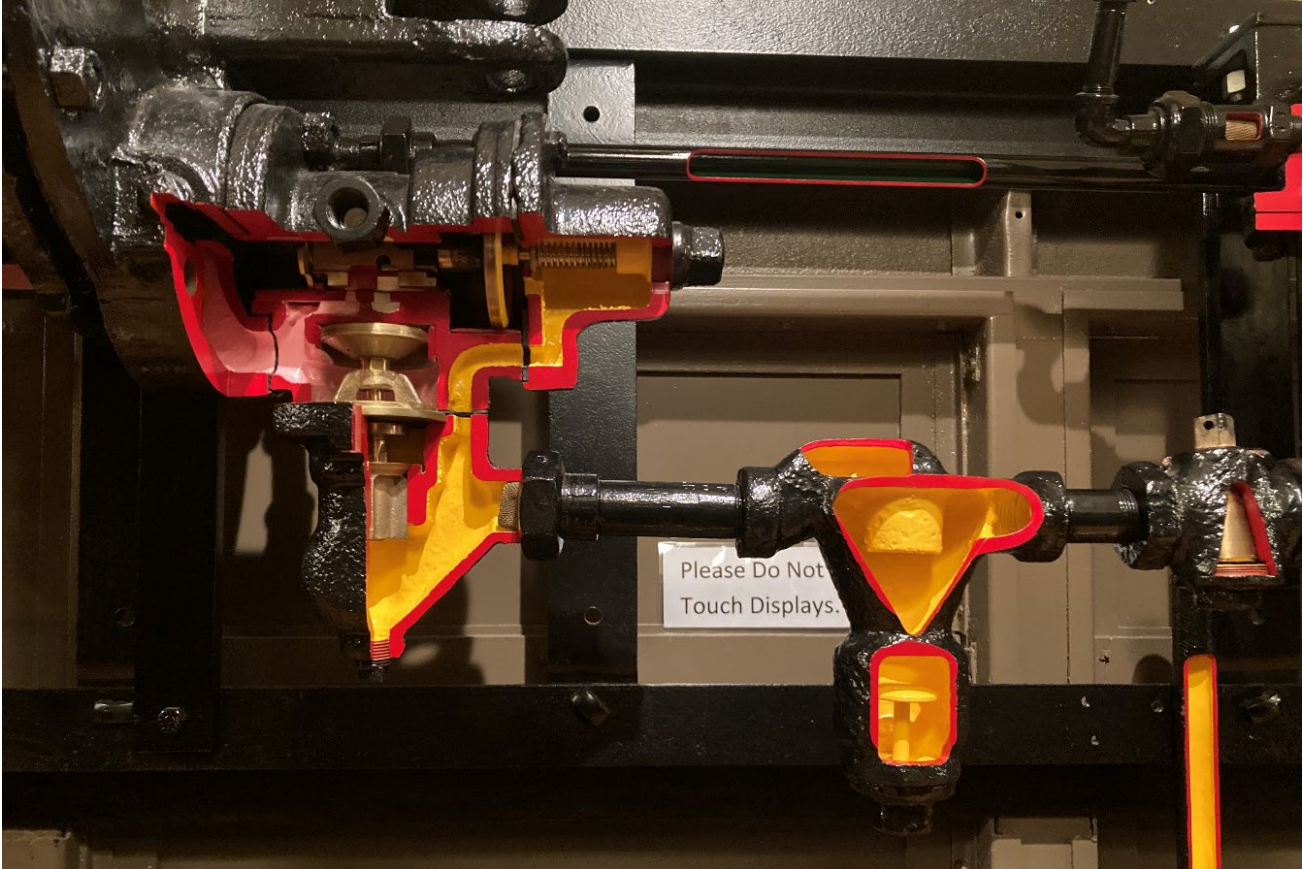
The inside is filled with various types of brakes and their support equipment.



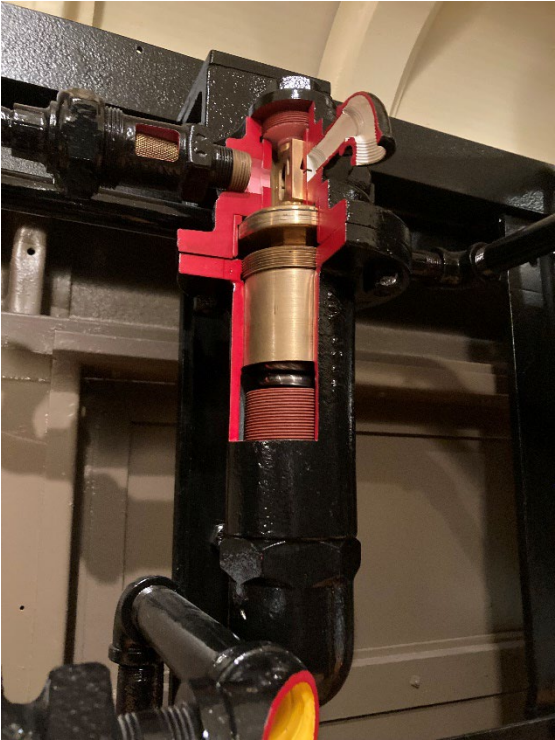
This was state of the art training in the first half of the 20th century.



Many of the key operating components of the system were shown as cutaways to provide detailed views of the interior operating of the systems. These cutaways are about 110 years old.



Another cutaway to the left showing a brake system. To the right is a vintage fan - and it works!



Another view of the brake systems in the training car.



More views of the brake training systems.



This engine from the late 1890s is actually on top of a pit.



Down in the pit under the engine is an outstanding set of charts and systems that outline how to make specific maintenance checks on the engine's systems.



The tool display below is also in the maintenance pit and some of the tools are keyed to the various maintenance tasks outlined under the engine.



On Sunday we had breakfast at the newly rebuilt Hersey Farms.



SGT Cusano, 2LT Cusano, Dan and Rochell Fortak are awaiting the next refill of coffee at Hersey Farms.



The displays opened early and we all got a chance to visit them. Below is an Air Corps maintenance display with Jeep and Bomb..



During WWII the Army had many railway maintenance and construction units that were under the Transportation Corps. Below are various railroad tools (Army issue) and a photo of a railway track construction company.



Various tools for maintaining rail systems are shown below along with photos of US Army railroad soldiers maintaining and repairing track.



The red "guidon" is for a Railway maintenance unit and it has the Transportation Corps insignia. To the left is a rail jack.



Below is more railway maintenance equipment to include oilers and individual soldier equipment.



Another view of the railway operating and maintenance units. The long bar on the table is a track gage.



Another view below of the track gage sitting on top of a blue denim work uniform. Notice the level in the center of the gage.



The end of the event came too quickly and we had to pack out on Sunday afternoon. Below TSG Weaver takes a break between packing of our displays.



Below 2LT Cusano continues to pack the medical displays as we prepare to load.



We look forward to returning to Strasburg for Troops and Trains in 2025 and we hope to see you there! For more information, visit AGFA Website <http://armygroundforces.org> and the Troops and Trains website at: <http://www.rrmuseumpa.org/>