

## **USA TRIP APRIL - MAY 2015. CAR HIRE IN PENNSYLVANIA.**

Another visit to the USA but for a change involving a car hire for a few days and driving around (mostly) parts of Pennsylvania photting freights. For this trip I was joined by my father and David Price. Amtrak tickets had been purchased in advance and hotels booked prior to leaving the UK. Any other rail tickets were purchased as and when required.

### **MONDAY 27<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2015.**

An early start from Newport with the 0532 HST to Reading for a stopping DMU forward to West Drayton and then a local bus to Heathrow. We were checked in with plenty of time to spare for our flight on a quite new 777 (test flight for the plane had been 6<sup>th</sup> January) which ran to time. After the usual tedium of the cross Atlantic flight we got to New York JFK where the queues going through immigration were not too bad and so we were stamped in within about 30 minutes, pretty good by recent standards. We timed our exit from immigration to perfection as just when we walked out to collect our baggage it dropped onto the conveyor right as we got there, we thought we were on a bit of a roll but then we had to wait about 15 minutes to pass through customs which is unusual.

As usual we took the air train to Jamaica then a LIRR EMU into the city. As we were staying in Rahway we needed to take NJT forward from Penn Station, however we decided that a visit to Woodbridge would be good so we could have some beers and food in the usual brewpub outside the station prior to heading to the hotel. We split our journey at Newark so we could take one of the direct services that run from Hoboken to Bay Head, hoping for a decent run on a diesel but it was a dual mode, disappointing but not really surprising as it makes operational sense, at least it was a winner as was the one we had to Newark as well. After a couple of beers and a decent scoff we headed to Rahway and took a taxi to the hotel and we were all soon crashed out after a long day.

### **MOVES**

AA N733AR (AA105) 1240 London Heathrow to New York JFK  
LIRR EMU (????) 1634 Jamaica to New York Penn  
NJT 4518 (3513) 1723 New York Penn to Newark Penn  
NJT 4532 (2311) 1808 Newark Penn to Woodbridge  
NJT 4520 (3516) 2015 Woodbridge to Rahway

### **TUESDAY 28<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2015**

After such an early night we were all up and about very early and so we were down at breakfast at 0700. After eating we took a gentle stroll to the station which took about 20 minutes and spent a bit of time watching quite a few NJT and Amtrak trains passing through. After this we headed to Trenton and spent another while on the platform before taking the River Line light rail to Pennsauken where we connected back to heavy rail to take us to Atlantic City. The train arrived with one of the ex Amtrak P40DC locos on the back, however we didn't get to see which one and I was hoping it would be 4801 (my last one) which upon arrival at Atlantic City we found out it was. Other locos out on the line were 4017, 4018, 4201 and 4210. This concluded our time with trains for the day and we next headed to the Tun Tavern brewpub near to the station for a couple of beers and food. Following this we checked into our hotel and took some time out on

the boardwalk before spending a while in the casinos. Between the three of us the worst result was “break even” so not a bad evening, and again we all had an early night.

### **MOVES**

NJT 4636 (3823) 0827 Rahway to Trenton

NJT DMU (xxxx) 1027 Trenton to Pennsauken (River Line light rail)

NJT 4801 (4623) 1144 Pennsauken to Atlantic City

### **WEDNESDAY 29<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2015**

Once again we were all up again a lot earlier than we needed to be. After a quick visit to the casino we set off to the station via McDs for breakfast. I was hoping that our train to Philadelphia would be one of the Geeps, preferably 4201, however we got 4210 so quite acceptable. With two hours to kill in Philly we took a walk to the City Hall and back which passed a while, but it was nice to get back to the station to cool down as it was a hot day. Our Amtrak train was more or less on time but in usual Amtrak style the simple task of getting people onto a train was turned into a debacle with people being filtered into different queues plus loads of conflicting instructions being barked out. Much as I enjoy travelling with Amtrak, I really get wound up by some of their operating practices. Down on the platform it was noted that we had a Genesis at the head of the train, this service has been having regular P32-8 traction for quite a while now and I was hoping for one of those so cheers Amtrak for not putting one out today. Arrival at our destination of Johnstown was slightly late, and we were soon checked into our hotel. We had hoped to do the incline railway at Johnstown but we found it was closed, however we did find a decent bar which was doing food (but no great beers) so we spent the evening there before heading to bed.

### **MOVES**

NJT 4210 (4616) 0853 Atlantic City to Philadelphia 30<sup>th</sup> St

AMT 88 (43) 1242 Philadelphia 30<sup>th</sup> St to Johnstown

### **THURSDAY 30<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2015**

We were all a bit later waking up today and at checkout we enquired if the hotel shuttle bus would be able to take us to the office of the car rental place we needed to get to and they said it would be OK. At the car hire place there was a bit of faffing about with paperwork but nothing too problematic. We were allocated a Dodge Dart, a quite sporty looking thing first registered in January 2015 and so we were on our way. First up we set off to Cresson, however we went the long way round after failing to read the map properly, although I'm pleased to say this was the only navigational problem we had on the trip. Cresson would be where we would spend the next four nights, and on arrival we took breakfast in an old style diner. Next we went round the corner to the B&B we were staying at just to make sure our booking was all in order, and also to leave our big bags. We then spent the rest of the day visiting various local spots around the place taking pictures of freights, and at the NS Altoona workshops various locos (or bits of loco) that were visible from public areas. Former Go Transit loco 532 was one of the locos out of the back of the works, believed to be heading to Metra in Chicago. On our second visit of the day to Horseshoe Curve I managed to get the strap of my camera snagged in the slats of the bench I was lifting it up from and ended up dropping it onto the ground. At first I thought the damage catastrophic as it wouldn't work and the lens wouldn't sit in place. I tried another lens and this worked OK so not as bad as first thought, and after a bit of messing about I found that the lens

that had been on it when it had been dropped would work if held in place while taking pictures. I've been thinking of buying a new camera for a while as I've had this one a few years, so looks like I'll actually have to get around to doing that now. We eventually called it quits at about 18.00 when the weather turned for the worse, and after eating at a local restaurant we spent the rest of the evening on the front porch of the B&B watching trains and some lightening while drinking bottled Yuengling Porter that we had bought from a shop around the corner.

### **VISITED TODAY:-**

Johnstown / Cresson / Horseshoe Curve / Altoona NS workshops / Horseshoe Curve / Gallitzin Tunnel / Cresson (68 miles by car)



Sparks fly as NS 6622 gets some attention to its cab at Altoona workshops.

### **FRIDAY 1<sup>st</sup> MAY 2015.**

The bad weather from the previous evening had turned to sunshine, and again we spent the day visiting a few of the local spots around the area. During the time we were at Portage we visited the small railway museum in the former station building, causing much excitement for the lady who was looking after the place who was delighted to have some out of town visitors. Upstairs there was a model railway and she even called in the guy who had built it to come and run it for us. Before leaving we had to pose for photographs which are going in the local newsletter! Eventually we ended up back in Cresson quite early in the evening and again spent time on the porch watching the trains go by, before retiring to a local pub for beers and food.

### **VISITED TODAY:-**

Cresson / Carney Crossing / Cassandra Overlook / Portage / Cassandra Overlook / Carney Crossing / Gallitzin Tunnel / Cresson (28 miles by car)



NS helpers on the back of a container train at Cassandra

### **SATURDAY 2<sup>nd</sup> MAY 2015**

Again the weather was sunny and again we visited a few of the local spots, including a return to the NS workshops where we noted quite a change in what was visible at the back of the place compared to a couple of days ago. The sunny weather came with some extreme heat and so by early afternoon we decided to head back to base where we could watch the trains in the shade, and chat with some of the other guests who were staying. Once it started cooling down a bit we went back out in the car briefly to photograph the Amtrak service at Lilly but we were out longer than we expected as Amtrak was an hour late. Back at Cresson we had our evening meal, this time in the local Italian place, and then another visit to the pub before calling it a night, There was a band playing in the pub and they wanted \$4 each to go in, however the doorman recognized me from three years ago and let us in for free.

### **VISITED TODAY:-**

Cresson / Gallitzin Tunnel (east portal overlook) / Altoona NS workshops / Altoona Station / Gallitzin Tunnel / Cresson / Carney Crossing / Lilly / Cresson (49 miles by car)



Huge tank train seen from above Gallitzin Tunnels east portal, back end visible in distance.

### **SUNDAY 3<sup>rd</sup> MAY 2015.**

After breakfast we made a quick getaway as we were heading a bit further afield today, down to Cumberland to visit the Western Maryland Railroad. We made good time and so had over an hour to spare before the steam hauled departure to Frostburg, with the same loco that was had three years ago. We were allowed to stand in the vestibule at the back of the train so were able to get some pictures out of the side as we travelled up the hill, the top part of the side doors being open and also a view straight out of the back onto the track. At Frostburg there was a layover of about 90 minutes so time for a couple of beers after designating my father to be the driver for our return trip. Back in Cumberland we managed to find the CSX loco workshops but there wasn't much we could get decent pictures of from public areas. We then went to the Amtrak station for a while but didn't see anything. Back in Cresson we spent more time on the porch and ended up with pizza for an evening meal as there was a limited choice of places open due to it being a Sunday.

### **VISITED TODAY:-**

Cresson / Cumberland WMRR / Cumberland CSX loco shop / Cumberland Amtrak / Cresson (159 miles by car)

### **MOVES:**

WMRR 734. 1130 Cumberland to Frostburg  
WMRR 734. 1400 Frostburg to Cumberland



WMRR steam loco 734 at Frostburg ready for the return trip to Cumberland.

### **MONDAY 4<sup>th</sup> MAY 2015.**

Last day with the hire car and after breakfast we said our goodbyes to Tom the B&B owner and staff plus the other guests and hit the road. Another really hot day but it wasn't a good day for trains. After we left the B&B we managed to photograph only five trains in seven hours up till the time we had to return the car to the rental office. During the time we spent at Portage we managed to photograph a freight before giving up and going for food, typically as we were away from the tracks three trains passed by. Later at staple Bend we spent more time but the only movement we saw was a procession of MoW machines, about 25 in all one behind the other, although we did get a friendly wave and a toot of the horn from most of them. Once we had given the car back we got the rental people to take us to the hotel and after check in we tried the inclined plane again, but still shut. After this we viewed the Amtrak train at the station, loco 165, so that would be our engine for the morning, no P32-8 again but at least a winner – locos we had seen on The Pennsylvanian during the past few days were 1, 88, 165 and 198. We ate at the same place we had used a few days earlier before heading to rest.

### **VISITED TODAY:-**

Cresson / Lilly / Cassandra Overview / Portage / Summerhill / Staple Bend / Johnstown (40 miles by car)



NS9131 leads a train past some MoW equipment at Cresson.

### **TUESDAY 5<sup>th</sup> MAY 2015.**

Our Amtrak train was on time and was 165 as expected. The train ran to time and from Philly was hauled by one of the Amtrak ACS-64 locos, my first run behind one of these. We got out at Trenton and connected straight onto NJT, and headed to Woodbridge as we had earlier in the trip for food and beers, all beers being \$2.50 each today as it was a Tuesday. Eventually we returned to Rahway and took a cab to the hotel and called it a night after a few more beers which we picked up at a local store.

### **MOVES:**

AMT 165 (42) 0904 Johnstown to Philadelphia 30<sup>th</sup> Street

AMT 605 (42) 1525 Philadelphia 30<sup>th</sup> Street to Trenton

NJT 4630 (3860) 1607 Trenton to Rahway

NJT 4600 (3405) 1657 Rahway to Woodbridge

NJT 4533 (3516) 2015 Woodbridge to Rahway

### **WEDNESDAY 6<sup>th</sup> MAY 2015.**

Last day of the trip and gloomy weather, we were going to walk to the station but took a taxi instead as it was raining. With time to kill we had a quick run to Ridgewood taking a different route in each direction as my father had never done these before. Coming back from Ridgewood we went through to Hoboken to see what was about and then took PATH into New York. Still with time to spare we had a couple of beers in NYC Stout before heading to the airport and our flight home, which was on the same aircraft that we had come over in. Arrival at Heathrow was

on time and we were through quite quickly. As we had factored in time for delays we had to wait ages at Reading for our booked train home, at least there was time for breakfast, and we also saw a 37 and a 31 while we were there.

### **MOVES:**

NJT 4607 (3832) 0959 Rahway to Secaucus Upper Level

NJT 4501 (1111) 1048 Secaucus Lower Level to Ridgewood (via Main Line)

NJT 4021 (1268) 1152 Ridgewood to Hoboken (via Bergen County Line)

LIRR EMU (???) 1507 New York Penn to Jamaica

AA N733AR (AA106) 1835 New York JFK to London Heathrow

### **CONCLUSION**

Another fine visit to the USA and a great stay as always in The Station Inn at Cresson, a very good rail fan base near many vantage points for getting good pictures of NS freight trains and helper movements which run frequently (well, most of the time anyway). Disappointment of the trip was not getting a P32-8 on The Pennsylvanian, I'd somewhat been banking on that and I know they were working up until at least the start of April.

LINK:- <http://www.stationinnpa.com/>



NS 9394 leading freight at Gallitzin 02-05-2015.

Pete C, May 2015.