

# GETTYSBURG BATTLE 150TH ANNIVERSARY PLANS IN YORK COUNTY

BY CHUCK BLARDONE

All photos are courtesy of Bob Gotwols, CFO, Steam Into History.

The Kloke Locomotive Works of Elgin, Illinois, has already constructed finished parts for the Civil War era replica 4-4-0 #17, York, as seen on its web site: <http://www.leviathan63.com/projects.html>. (See "Projects" for progress on #17.) York is to be a standard gauge, fully operational locomotive, patterned upon 4-4-0 #119, previously constructed for the Golden Spike Historical Site. It and a five-car train are to be completed by 2013 to operate on the former Northern Central between Hanover Junction and New Freedom, Pa., in commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg. This track is now owned by York County and is on the same right of way as the Heritage Rail Trail.

*Steam into History* is a nonprofit organization. It plans to build and operate the train to chronicle York County's role in Civil War history and to promote the area as a tourist destination. The organization's board of directors includes D. Reed Anderson, G. Robert Gotwols, Michael P. Sibol, William H. Simpson, and Philip R. Yates.

*Steam into History, Inc.*, has been granted an operating agreement by York County government to operate an oil-burning, steam-powered excursion train, to be themed around a topic not common in York County: the Civil War.



Hanover Junction, Pa., November 1863. The NCR track is to the right of the station and the Hanover Branch RR to the left. (Matthew Brady photo)

The group wants to recreate part of Abraham Lincoln's route to and from Gettysburg to deliver his famous speech in 1863. Lincoln traveled that north/south route, paused in Hanover Junction, and then steamed west/east on the Hanover Branch Railroad.

Four months had passed since the Battle of Gettysburg, the so-called high-water mark of the Confederacy. President Lincoln was invited to speak at the dedication of the Soldiers' National Cemetery in Gettysburg. His remarks were a work in progress on Nov. 18, 1863, as he boarded his five-car train (draped in red, white and blue bunting) in Washington, D.C., for the four-hour ride.

Some say that Lincoln worked on the speech on the train, doffing his black silk top hat and using it as an improvised desk on which to write. Perhaps he wrote on the back of an envelope. There is some sentiment that he simply shared anecdotes and relaxed with his companions, who included Secretary of State William H. Seward. What is certain is that what would become known as Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address" is today considered one of the greatest speeches in American history. Lincoln's journey to Gettysburg is one of the many exciting and intriguing York County connections to the Civil War that Steam into History will bring to life. Other events of the period during the Civil War in the area of Hanover Junction will also be chronicled.

This history will be enhanced through the use of re-actors, on the train or along the route: perhaps Lincoln as a passenger; soldiers vying for control of bridges and tracks, or 16-year-old telegrapher apprentice John Shearer relaying messages from the Gettysburg battlefield to Washington.

Today, the rolling countryside along the old Northern Central route is relatively undeveloped, consistent with how the area would have appeared in the 1860s. The unspoiled beauty belies the hub of purposeful activity that was Hanover Junction during the Civil War. The station saw as many as 30 train stops daily, as the Northern Central carried troops and supplies heading to Washington for service in the Army of the Potomac. After the Battle of Gettysburg, wounded soldiers were transported to hospitals in York and Baltimore.

Seventeen months after the "Gettysburg Address," Lincoln was slain. The Northern Central carried Lincoln's funeral train through New Freedom and Hanover Junction, stopping in the city of York to take on water for the train's boiler.

*Steam into History* passengers also will learn about the railway's role in the growth of small towns along the route and its major contributions to the economic development of York County.

The *Steam into History* train is scheduled to begin operating by 2013, in time to mark the 150th anniversary of the "Gettysburg Address."

Many in the York area have long been ambivalent about observing local Civil War ties, because York's fathers surrendered to a Confederate division moving to the Susquehanna River in late June 1863. Furthermore, rail excursions sometimes have trouble sustaining themselves, but the investors see the Abe Lincoln link as marketable. They recognize York County's many contributions to the Civil War – a military hospital, the Battle of Hanover, the Battle of Wrightsville and the Northern Central's role in transporting tens of thousands of soldiers to battlefields in the south, including many of York County's native sons.

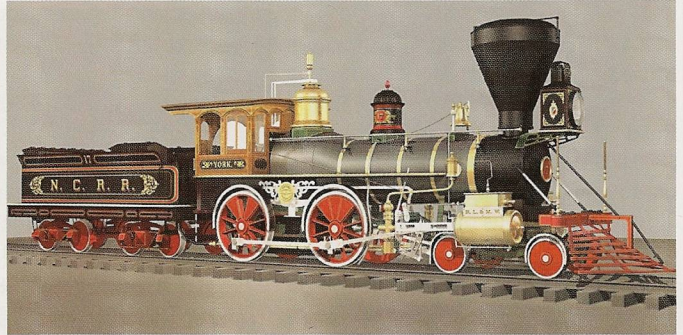
Perhaps *Steam into History* will couple with Muddy Creek Forks<sup>1</sup> and support the Stewartstown Railroad<sup>2</sup> efforts to create a critical mass of rail experiences. Not many locales would offer three excursion services within such proximity.



#### Footnotes:

1. The Maryland and Pennsylvania Railroad, affectionately known as the Ma & Pa, connected Baltimore and York on a narrow-gauge line that traced a meandering, scenic 77-mile route. The village at Muddy Creek Forks sits along the railroad line. It is being preserved as an example of a typical railroad community in the steam-engine era. A project of the Maryland & Pennsylvania Railroad Preservation Authority, it depicts what it was like to live in the "Forks" in 1915. Many buildings survive from that era. Work continues on restoration of the general store, post office, roller mill, grain elevator, farm buildings, creamery and a 1900 railroad station.
2. The tiny Stewartstown Railroad is in southern York County, near the Mason-Dixon Line. Its 7.4 miles of track meander westward between its namesake town to New Freedom, where its rails connect to the former PRR's Northern Central. Along the way, the line passes two train stations, an enginehouse, and crosses several bridges, some of which are on the National Register of Historic Places. Recent times have not been kind to the railroad; it is in real

danger of disappearing if funds to rehabilitate and restore the line are not forthcoming. The Friends of the Stewartstown Railroad, Inc., a not-for-profit, tax-exempt organization, is conducting a capital campaign to raise funds needed to preserve the Railroad.



Artist's rendition of #17, York, Steam Into History's first locomotive. The colors shown represent the selected color scheme.

(Copyright Jon M. Davis, artist)

### Ex-Penny Tunnel near Pottsville, Pa. to be Buried New Road to Improve Traffic at Rt. 61 and Tunnel Road

A contractor is filling in a former Pennsylvania Railroad tunnel to build a road to serve a few businesses just off Route 61 in East Norwegian Township.

It's part of the Empire Education Group's plan to expand its home office, and it's spurred plans to improve traffic flow at Route 61 and Tunnel Road, according to Frank J. Zukas, president of Schuylkill Economic Development Corp. Franklin K. Schoeneman, chairman and CEO of Empire, said to allow safe passage for the patrons of the businesses along the strip, including McDonald's, an access road is being constructed at a cost of \$500,000. "We're filling in an old railroad tunnel with thousands of loads of fill. It's a huge, two-track train tunnel. The road will go on top of it," Schoeneman said.

A half-century ago, the PRR used those tracks, according to David Derbes, president of the Historical Society of Schuylkill County, Pottsville: "That was part of the railroad line that went from Mount Carbon up to Frackville."