

OHIO RIVER & WESTERN RAILWAY Company

William R. Logan – Railroad Historian
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Views Along the OR&W Saving Coach #15

“Views Along the OR&W” are historical accounts, anecdotes, and fact-based insights into the Ohio River and Western Railway – Ohio’s last beloved narrow-gauge railway common carrier 1875-1931.

authored by William R. Logan, President, Friends of the Ohio River and Western Railway Historical Society

Introduction:

Coach #15 of the Ohio River and Western Railway (OR&W) stands today as a proud symbol of Shadyside, Ohio’s rich narrow gauge railroad heritage. Carefully restored and painted in its original Victorian-era colors (photo #1), the Coach is now displayed in the Shadyside Community Building, offering residents and visitors a tangible connection to the Village’s past. This historic railway car, once a vital part of daily life along the OR&W, reflects the ingenuity and spirit of the narrow-gauge era that shaped the development and character of Shadyside from 1878 to 1931. The preservation of Coach #15 not only honors the legacy of the railway but also celebrates the community’s commitment to remembering and sharing the Village’s unique history.



PHOTO #1 – Since 1992, Coach #15 has resided in the Shadyside Community Building.

First as the Bellaire and Southwestern 1875-1882, then as the Bellaire, Zanesville, and Cincinnati 1882-1902, and finally as the Ohio River and Western 1902 -1931 under Pennsylvania Railroad control from 1912 - 1931 the little narrow gauge trains ran down the middle of Central Avenue of Shadyside, Ohio for 52 years - travelling from Bellaire, Ohio to Zanesville, Ohio shaping the development and charm of the Village for residents and visitors alike. The railroad's promoters chose 3 feet narrow gauge rather than the more common standard gauge of 4 feet 8 ½ inches to reduce construction costs and better negotiate the steep hills and valleys of southeastern Ohio.

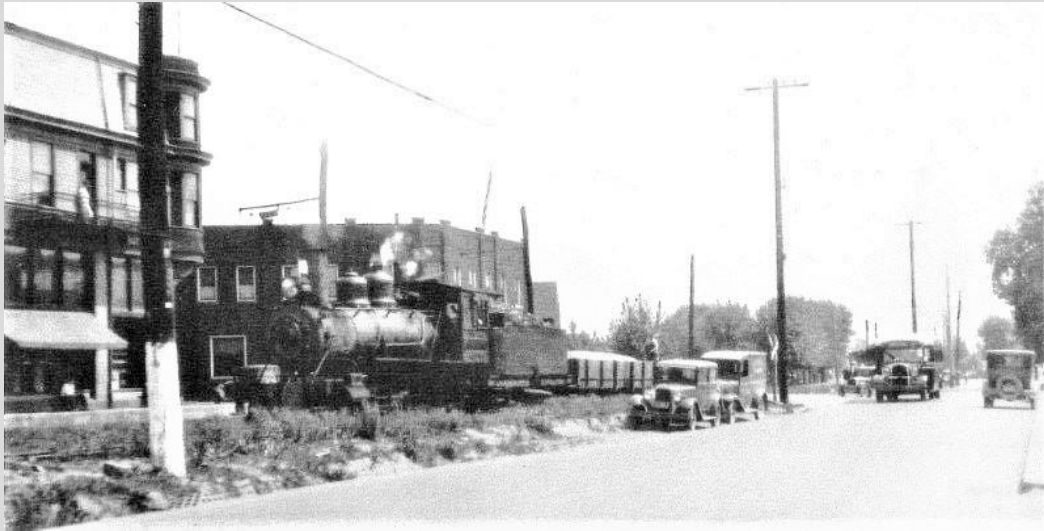


PHOTO #2 OR&W Consolidation Engine #9669 southbound switching cars along Central Avenue at 40th street, Shadyside, Ohio, 1931. The railway ran right down the middle of the street creating a broad median separating north and south bound vehicular lanes, businesses, residences, and parking spaces. Although the trains are long gone the median and wide avenue remain. Pc Wrlogan collection



PHOTO #3 –West 40th Street and Central Avenue in Shadyside today in 2025. The median where the OR&W mainline and sidings ran is now filled with flowers, grass, curbing, streetlights, and parking. Pc Wrlogan, Google Earth 2025

The OR&W and Shadyside – a brief History:

The Village of Shadyside began to take shape in 1878 when the Bellaire and Southwestern (forerunner of the Ohio River and Western) narrow gauge railroad first established its narrow-gauge mainline along Poultney Road (now Central Avenue) past the James Leasure owned “Shadyside Farm”. The Railroad established a station stop there and named it appropriately “Shadyside”. When the village was incorporated in 1901, The name became official and remains to this day compliments of its railroad origin. The railroad quickly brought new residents and industries to the village. The arrival of the railroad was pivotal to Shadyside’s growth (photo #2). It spurred the establishment of a permanent station, numerous businesses, churches, schools, residences, and separate trolley line along and near Central Avenue. Factories producing soap, ketchup, marbles, and even caskets soon followed, contributing to the Village’s economic vitality. Thanks to the railroad, Central Avenue evolved into the broad, bustling main street it remains today (photo #3).

Coach #15’s Service and Retirement:

The journey of Coach #15 and how it came to rest in Shadyside has a long history.

Coach #15, its sister Coach #16, and matching Combine Car #28 were all purchased simultaneously secondhand by the Ohio River and Western Railway at the end of 1913 by way of the former narrow gauge Hoosac Tunnel and Wilmington Railway in Vermont after the HT&WRR was standard gauged in August 1913.

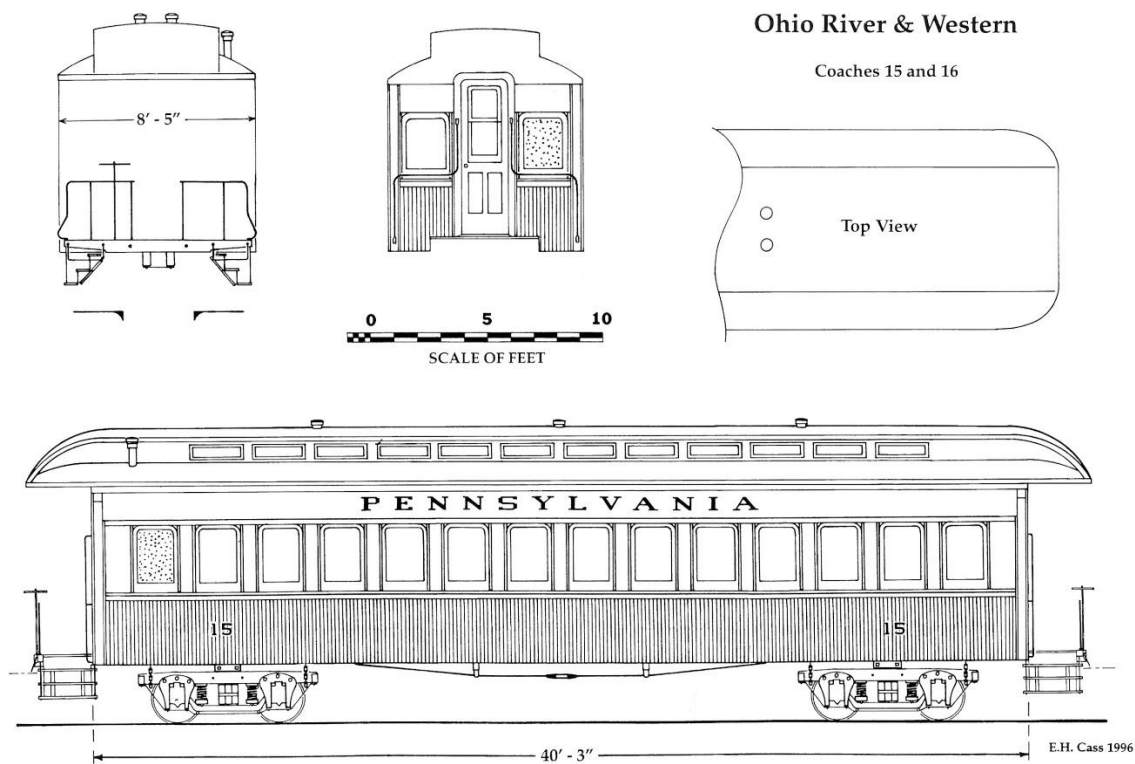


PHOTO #4 Coach #15 drawn by Ed Cass from original field measurements “Hidden Treasures”.
Pc – Ed Cass 1995, Hidden Treasures

These two coaches were the largest on the OR&W when put in service being over 40 feet long and seating 52 passengers each (Photo #4). Both Coaches soon after purchase were repainted in OR&W chocolate brown with white OHIO RIVER AND WESTERN lettering. In 1923 under Pennsylvania Railroad control the Coaches were repainted Pennsylvania Maroon red with yellow gold PENNSYLVANIA lettering. Both Coach #15 and #16 served the railroad for 18 years from 1913 to 1931 routinely stopping in Shadyside for passengers coming and

going. Combine #29 was sold in 1928 with the closure of the western half of the line. Finally, with the closure of the remaining narrow gauge on May 30, 1931, between Woodsfield, Ohio and Bellaire, Ohio, both Coach #15 and #16 were sold by the railroad scraper, R. T. Beldon Construction, in 1932 to private individuals along the line.

Coach #15 was purchased from the Scrapper by the Barton family of Vallonia, Ohio for use on their farm (Photo #5). Vallonia Station was located along Wegee Creek and was the last narrow-gauge station stop westbound up the deep Wegee Valley from Shadyside and the Ohio River. Once removed from the rails, the Coach served as a family keepsake, useful farm storage building, a chicken coup, and finally a junk shed for the Bartons.



PHOTO #5 – Coach #15 in 1945 resting in the weeds at Vallonia Station. pc - Paul Dunn 1945, Wrlogan collection

However, by the end of 1965 (and about 70 years old), the coach made mostly of wood and exposed to the Ohio weather was in rough shape (photo #6). The roof had collapsed, all the window glass was broken out, and the metal components gone for salvage.



PHOTO #6 – Coach #15 at Vallonia, Ohio in 1965. For 34 years it sat in the muddy field slowly deteriorating.
pc - Clyde Kennedy 1965, Wrlogan collection

Preservation Efforts:

Fortunately, the car was saved from complete destruction in the mid 1960's by Clyde R. Kennedy of West Rushville, Ohio, a master builder and artist by trade, an OR&W railway historian and fan for sure. Clyde had grown up along Wegee Creek at Crow Station in his youth, attended Shadyside Elementary School, and walked the tracks of the narrow gauge. As an artist Clyde has produced many oil paintings, ink and pencil sketches of the railway that were displayed at prominent Shadyside businesses. Clyde felt Coach #15 deserved to be saved and took on the task of its rehabilitation. With help from family members, Clyde carefully salvaged both ends of the coach and transported the heavy pieces 100 miles to his Rushville, Ohio studio (the historic Rushville Theatre) for re-assembly. There, he meticulously reassembled the coach using the original wood components, restoring both the interior and exterior (photo #7).

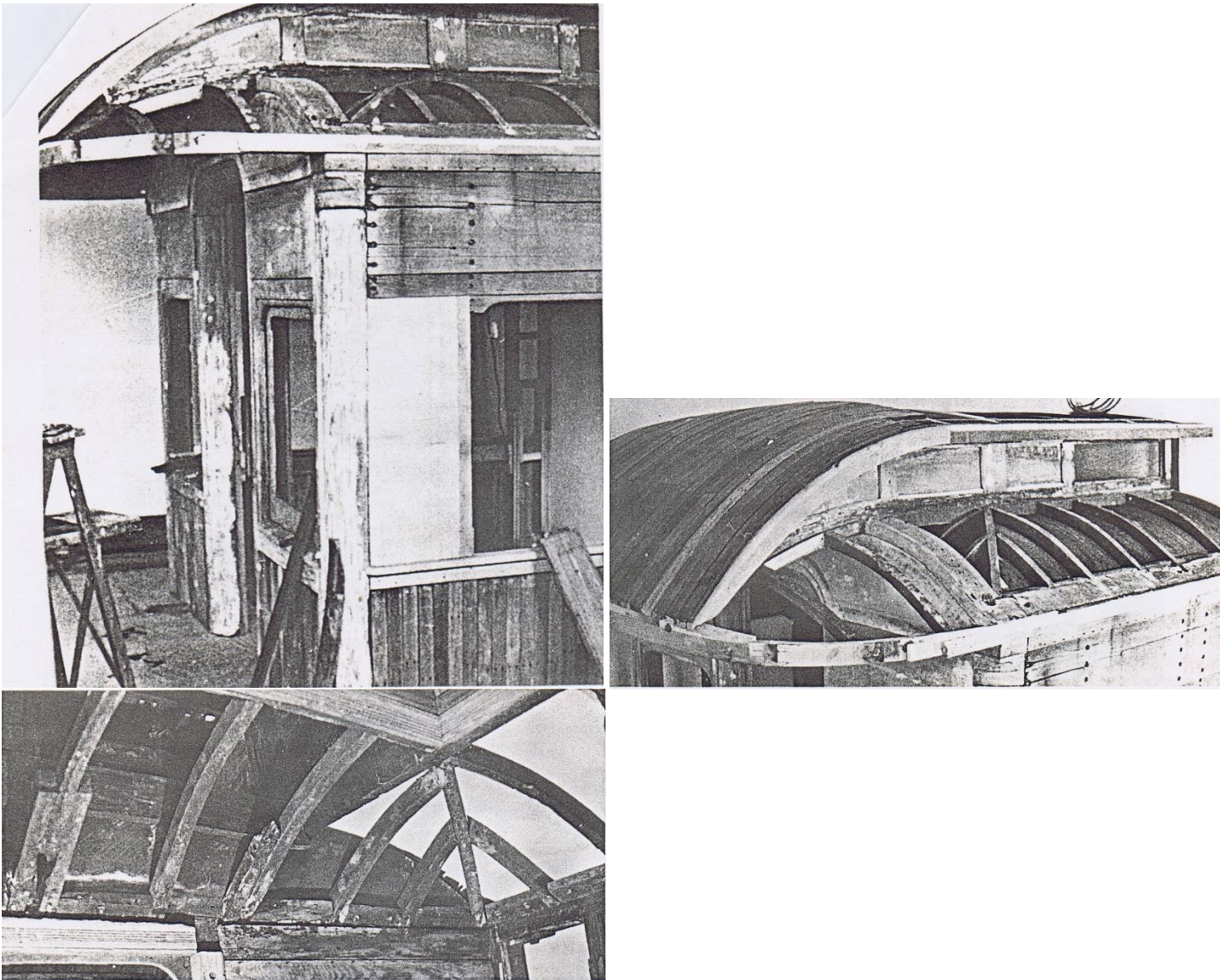


PHOTO #7 - Wood from both ends of the car were salvaged and reassembled. Both interior and exterior views of the coach being restored using the original salvaged wood components. pc – Edwin Kennedy 1968, Narrow Gauge and Shortline Gazette, March 1977. Wrlogan collection.

By 1969, at the Kennedy Studio the Coach was ready for public display (photo #8). It served as a unique entrance to the artist's private studio where visitors could appreciate both his public artwork and the legacy of the OR&W. Guests after viewing Clyde's art in the public space sometimes would be invited thru the Coach to enter his private studio where his in-work creations could be viewed.



PHOTO #8 – Clyde R. Kennedy (46 years young) standing in front of re-constructed Coach #15 in his Rushville, Ohio Kennedy Art Studio in 1969. Pc - Edwin Kennedy 1969. Wrlogan collection.

In 1992, when Clyde decided to close the Art Studio and retire, he made the decision to donate Coach #15 to the Village of Shadyside where he grew up and had family and friends. Arrangements were made with Village officials, the coach was disassembled, transported and reassembled by Clyde at his own expense to the Community Building, ensuring that Coach #15 would be preserved for future generations to enjoy (photo #9).



PHOTO #9 – Artist Clyde R. Kennedy (age 84) in April 2007 standing next to his restored Coach #15 Shadyside, Ohio Community Building in a similar pose from his Kennedy Art Studio photo of 38 years prior Pc Wrlogan April 2007.

Legacy:

Although Clyde passed away at the age of 92 in 2015, his dedication to preserving the history of the Ohio River and Western Railway lives on through Coach #15. Today the restored coach stands as a lasting tribute to Clyde, The OR&W, and the Community of Shadyside. When you are in Shadyside be sure to stop by the Community Building to view Coach #15 step inside and listen quietly – you might just hear the echo of a faint train whistle announcing you have arrived at Shadyside Station.

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William Logan, OR&W Historian, 11/25/2025

Bibliography:

Hidden Treasures – The Story of the Ohio River and Western Railway, Edward Cass, Timber Times, 1997.
American Gauge Railroads, George W. Hilton, Stanford University Press, 1990, pages 538-539.
Shortline and Narrow Gauge Gazette, March 1977, pages 50-55.
Personal Recollections: William R. Logan, OR&W Railway Historian

Appendix:

Additional information on the Ohio River and Western Railway can be obtained by accessing the following website and Facebook sites:

Friends of the OR&W Home Page website<https://www.ORWFriends.org>

Ohio River and Western Railroad History and Models

.....<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ORandWRailroad>

Friends of the Ohio River and Western Historical Society... ..

.....<https://www.facebook.com/FoORW/>

Personal Note and acknowledgement about my friend Clyde Kennedy: I had the honor of Clyde's friendship in his retirement years. He was an amazing talented individual throughout his long life. He was an Army Air Corps veteran, display artist, master builder, carpenter, mason, and published author. Our common bond was dedication to the history of the Ohio River and Western Railway. If you want to appreciate what life was like for four young boys (Clyde and his three brothers) growing up along Wegee Creek during the Depression and end of the narrow gauge OR&W, please access a copy of the "**Hard Surface Road**", authored by Clyde R. Kennedy 2010, publisher Damselfly Productions.