

The Digest

Presidents Report

By: Craig Hartman

Special points of interest:

- New meeting location
- Easter Bunny
- Joe Weber Fund
- URHS work site
- New Members
- Get Involved
- Getting our hands dirty

Inside this issue:

<i>Easter train</i>	2
<i>MOW</i>	2
<i>How we got here</i>	3
<i>JKW Fund</i>	4
<i>URHS Report</i>	5
<i>Treasurer's Report</i>	5
<i>Meeting Notice</i>	6

Another year of rail-roading has begun, with what looks to be a very busy one for all of us at the VRA. With the writing of this letter, already some of the Easter Bunny Train signs have gone out in anticipation of another sold-out, fun time for all. If you can give some time to sign placement, posters, sales help at the station, being a character or helping crew the train, any or all would be appreciated. This is OUR club, so let's all work together to make this year better than ever! The train is scheduled for March 15th out of Glen Rock, so time is short to be part of this exciting ride! Let's just

do it! Several of us also went down to the Boonton Yard with the URHS to clean up and secure some of the vandalized equipment that is now stored there, very sad to see. This is something any of us can join in with our fellow preservationists, so watch for another opportunity to come out and help our friends at the URHS. Our donation at their last meeting of \$7000.00 was received with great thanks to the VRA for the running of our Santa Train in conjunction with them, as this brings the reality of bringing the 5012 back home a lot closer. Steve Weiss has already applied for motorcar excursions from the NYSW, and hopefully approval will come fast so as we can post to the various sites and "reserve" the dates as not to conflict with other runs in the area. Look for a possible "surprise" in excursions this year! All motorcar owners, spring is almost upon us, and the time to maintain your motorcar is NOW! Oil changes, lubing, filter changes, etc. should be done now, and not on the rails when we hold up everybody else. If you have questions, look on one of the speeder sites, or give me a call, always glad to help. I am personally looking forward to a fun summer "on the rails".

Easter Bunny is coming to town by train.

March 15th will see us on the rails once more as we once again run our very popular Easter Bunny trains. Due to how busy we are with other projects we have decided to only run one day of trains and we have chosen Glen Rock as our starting

point. New Jersey Transit will again give us at least a 7-car train, which will depart Glen Rocks Boro Hall station at 10:20, 12:20 and 2:20. For the first time in many many years we are going to have a price increase to \$9.00 for Children and

&13.00 for adults. But if customers order on line they will save 50 cents per ticket and with over 85% of the tickets being bought that way the increase for most will only be 50 cents.

(Continued on page 2)

Easter Bunny is coming to town by train.

Continued from page 1

We will again be staffing the station on Tuesday and Thursday nights from 7 to 10 PM and on Saturday and Sunday afternoons from 12 to 4. Because of the new ticketing system we only need 2 volunteers each day, down from 4 or more in years past. Getting posters and signs out still requires a good volunteer base but that is only for a few days.

We are looking for train and platform help as well as volun-



teers willing to put on a costume. If you, a friend or relative is interested in helping out in any way please call the station at 973-238-0555 and leave a message our write to us at vratrips@yahoo.com and let us know what you can do.

This year we will again use the funds raised from these trips to help us raise the funds needed to hopefully move and restore Hawthorne Station. In addition we will use the funds for

other railroad restoration, preservation and educational projects that we work on each year and new ones that come along in the future.

I know I and others have said this many times, but without volunteers we could never do what we do. Over the years we have raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for lots of worthwhile railroad related projects and it all happened because of volunteers like you.

See you on the rails and at the station.

KC

M.O.W. Crew-Days 2007-2008

The last six months activities of the MOW crew have been busy. After the scrappers of the M&NJ RR pulled the rail out from under our container at Johnson, NY, we got everything out of the container and had it repositioned by a local guy with a flatbed truck. Craig Hartman took the mowing machine to Pete Stagg's place where Charley Roselius and I helped do a lot of deferred maintenance, and added

some badly needed improvements.. Then in November we took the machine up to the Catskill Mountain Railroad, west of Kingston NY where some of us are official volunteers. On the same day we had a 16-mile



round trip mowing as we went. See **Picture 1** showing us pausing for lunch at the West Hurley dam that day. A number of sections that need additional work were identified for the next trip. However on the next trip up to Ashokan we found a carburetor problem with the machine that we could not solve. We stored

President's Report Continued from Page 1

On another note , my own Beaver car restoration has begun, and the body is off, and the frame is in the shop to start the frame up restoration with a new power plant installed. |

I think that in the Northeast area, we now have the highest concentration of Beavercars and

Woodings around. Our own restoration on the 40B will be commencing again shortly as the weather warms up and the daylight hours lengthen, so watch for notices to be a part of this effort as well. Watch for opportunities as well if you want to be part of the MOW gang as well, as we will be helping the CMRR and

M&NJ once the weather clears in their operations and clearing as well. More on that at the meeting. Hawthorne station progress to be updated at the meeting. Well, that's all for now, I will look forward to seeing all of you at the meeting.

Craig W. Hartman

M.O.W. Crew-Days 2007-2008

continued from page 2

the machine under tarps up there, but it snowed later. We were not able to recover the machine for some time, but the winter weather precluded any mowing operations anyway.

Eventually we did bring the machine back to the container at Johnson for safe dry winter storage. Maintenance and improvements on the machine are a never-ending task. The latest is the need for front and rear lights as required by the CMRR.

We had several workdays at Johnson, improving the machine but improving the access to the container as well. Our latest workday stressed getting some rail to put in front of the container so we could work on the machine outside in good light. Craig towed one piece with his truck and our "logging



chain" from a short distance south. See Figure 2.

A second piece, located by Larry ten Hoeve earlier, was frozen into the ground just north of our container. As we were chipping

away at the ice, a local guy stopped and offered to pull it out with his machine that was stored right across the road! He did just that. Figure 3 shows the rail being positioned for storage behind the container.

On this last workday, January 23, we had five people turn out, the largest crew we have had in a long time, and as you can see it was cold. A great display of



VRA solidarity! Pete Stagg, Charley Roselius, and Tim Kane were there as well. Tim Stack, our Editor planned to be there, but a new commitment prevented it.

Come spring the machine will be re-located to Ashokan, NY on the Catskill Mountain RR and we will be resuming our work up there. There are plans for a container up there to provide secure, dry storage in between mowing trips. Anyone wishing to join us should apply for the free membership in the CMRR volunteer by sending in the form stored on our Yahoo Group site in the Files Section.

How "WE" got here,

By Justin Kerstner and Carolyn Hoffman

Justin has been a fan of trains since childhood, taking pictures and collecting small things like steam gauges and a lantern or two. I became interested in the railroads through Justin, starting with chasing the NYS&W freight around the Newfoundland/West Milford/Jefferson area and diversifying from there. After outfitting a past pick-up truck with trucker-style air horns, Justin decided a *real* horn would be much better. In the fall of 2006, after months of researching and listening to sound bites, he purchased a 1952 Nathan M5. Thus began our collection of diesel air horns, which has now expanded to 6 horns, a few steam whistles, and a air bell. We have started doing some restora-

tions, such as cleaning, sand blasting, and refinishing horns, both for ourselves and for other horn owners. (If there are members with horns or whistles in need of repair they can feel free to contact us.)

Various "Hoot & Toot" events occur all over the country for diesel air horn enthusiasts. Many collectors have full "rigs" set up, large air tanks fitted into the bed of a pickup or back of an SUV, plumbed into the cab. Some have elaborate set ups with multiple horns and valves; while some are as simple as a tank, some hoses and fittings, a valve, and a rope into the cab to open the valve. A large compressor is rented, towed in by one of the attendees, and we

all chip in to use it for the weekend. So far we have been to two such events in Altoona, PA at Horseshoe Curve, and have more scheduled this year.

Our involvement with the VRA started in October of 2007 with the NYS&W Speeder trip. Justin had seen a post through one of his rail fan groups about people needed to flag crossings. Always looking to do something interesting and rail-related, we volunteered. In the two weeks or so leading up to the even we did some reading up on the VRA and its various activities. Saturday morning we showed up ready to flag with membership forms in hand. Our first introduction was to KC Smith who,

(continued on page 4)

How “WE” got here,

Continued from page 3

despite being up to his eyeballs in duties already, was warm and friendly. Every person we came in contact with the rest of the weekend was equally accepting of us as newcomers. We got to ride along the first day, a picture perfect day over beautiful country. The stops during the day allowed us to meet other VRA members as well as various speeder owners. By lunch we knew the speeder bug had bitten us both. Sunday we flagged crossings somewhat successfully. An unseasonably warm day meant traffic through Bergen County was worse than usual, but everyone made it back safely and the run seemed to be a huge success. Somehow by the end of Sunday Shirley Hartman had talked me into being an Elf for the Santa train and was already recruiting me for Easter! We were invited to join in for dinner that evening and got to know more VRA members

whom we hadn't had time to speak with during the day. By the end of the following week we were both paid members!



Justin and I both ended up volunteering for the Santa Train, me as an elf and Justin as a car host. This led to us being asked to help out with Tri-State Railway Historical Society's Santa Train

two weeks later. We have not yet been to a regular meeting, but after reading that board meetings were open to members on a non-participatory basis we sat in on one. Also, there have been some social gatherings amongst some members which we have thoroughly enjoyed. It is truly the people as much as the goal of the group that make us look forward to more work days and speeder trips. I can confidently say that we are both planning on being members for a long time.

With the Easter Bunny Train approaching we have been placing signs and looking for inexpensive ways to cool those costumes. Hopefully we will have our own speeder on the rails by late summer or fall, and will most certainly continue to be actively involved in the VRA.

Joseph K. Weber Fund

By K.C. Smith

As many of you know just before our founding member Joe Weber passed away last January he asked us to take his railroad collection and sell it to raise funds to be used for the preservation of railroad history or for other worthy railroad related causes that he would have wanted to support. To meet his request we have gotten most of his collection from his home and we have cataloged most all of it and sold a few of the items to date. On March 2nd we will be bringing some of the collection to the Jersey Central NHRS Train show in Clark to begin the public



Joe Weber at Steamtown, Scranton, PA, October 2006: He along with many other VRA members attended the 10th Anniversary C&O 614 Crew Reunion.

sale process. Before that date any member who would like to look through the list of the items available and purchase anything at the price listed can do so. Because we are at the station selling tickets every Tuesday and Thursday night and Saturday and Sunday afternoon, all members are welcome to come by and see what is available. Items sold at train shows and on line will be offered at a higher price than members will pay. The collection includes everything from HO scale box cars to brass engines and from lanterns to china.

URHS Report

The URHS board and many members of member groups have been very busy trying to get all the equipment spread out in a number of places around the state secured and in the case of the equipment at the Ridgefield and Gilbert generating stations into shape to move to Boonton. All of the equipment long stored at what was to be the Morristown restoration site (before the NIMBY's struck) is now at the Boonton restoration site. A number of well-attended work parties have taken place at Boonton, with a number of our members attending the one on January 19. One of the regulars, and others, that have been helping out have been posting a lot of information and pictures on the web at www.railroad.net. I would encourage everyone to take a look and see what has been going on as and get out and volunteer to help when you can. A number of the member groups will be hosting events in the coming months starting with the Jersey Central NRHS Train show on March 2nd at Mother Seton School



in Clark, NJ. We will be having a table at this show to begin to sell items from the Joe Weber collection. This is one of the best train shows in the northeast and I would highly recommend everyone interested to attend. March 29th is the date set

for Eastrail 2008, which will again be held at Warren Hills Regional High School in Washington, NJ. Tickets for this event are available on the web at www.urhs.org. Next will be the Friend's Symposium on April 5, 2008 at Drew University, please look for information and a registration form elsewhere in this newsletter and attend if you can, it

By KC Smith

is a great day. The last thing going on is the ELHS Spring meet on April 13th at Holiday Inn in Parsippany, for info on this please contact VRA member Pete Hasler at 973-838-6265.

I am happy to report that the Erie 5012 fund received a \$10,000 donation, from an anonymous donor. Thanks to that plus the \$7500 we have given and other donations the total is now approaching \$38,000, including pledges. This is enough to buy the car and most likely get it moved back to its home state of New Jersey.

The last item I have is to thank Bill McKelvey, the editor of the New Jersey Transport Heritage newsletter for his very kind words he wrote about us in the February 2008 edition. We were front-page news with our Santa Trains and page 3 news about our southern division motor-car trip. In addition we had a testimonial published from a passenger on our Santa train. To get a copy of this and future editions please join the Friends group please visit their web site at www.njthc.org.

Treasurer's Report

By Charles Roselius

As of December 31, 2007 we had a cash balance of \$38,951.01:

Checking account	\$15,115.72
Savings account	\$20,006.14
Joseph K. Weber Fund	\$ 3,558.41
PayPal	\$ 270.74

As a matter of interest our Santa Train rides netted us a little over \$17,000 (A few small bills were not paid at the time).

This allowed us to make a contribution of \$7000 to the URHS. to support the effort to return the Erie RR "doodlebug" No.M5012 back to New Jersey.

VOLUNTEER RAILROADERS ASSOCIATION

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Phone: 973-238-0555
E-mail: volunteerra@yahoo.com

So Close Only the Paycheck is Missing

**We are on the web
at www.vratrips.org**

Meeting Notice

New Meeting Location: St. Clements Church

The VRA met in our little train station in Hawthorne for many years. Well now we have found a new venue that will better meet the needs of our ever-growing membership. Thanks to new members Andrea and Robert Rebner we now have a new and much bigger meeting location, St. Clements Church located at 271 Lafayette Ave., Hawthorne.

The main parking lot is located in the back of the church which is easily accessible from Grand Ave. and is within sight of the



station . If you are at the station just cross the tracks and make a left and go less than a half a block and make a right

into the lot. The church is brick and is just past the apartments. The meeting is February 21st and the meeting starts at 7:30 and we no longer need to bring a chair. I have a really nice entertainment lined up for this coming meeting. Ron wal- has a program on railroads of the 1950's. It is conveniently located near our station which will be open for anyone that would like to view the Joseph K. Weber Collection.