

The Digest

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Special points of interest:

- 2008 Santa Trains
- NYS&W Motorcar Trips
- Hawthorne Station Update
- VRA Elections

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Hawthorne Station Update

By KC Smith

I am pleased to report that after many years of trying to get approval to move and restore Hawthorne Station, there may finally be a light at the end of the tunnel and it is not an on-coming train. On October 29th Mark Schmitt and I met with the President of the NYSW, his Associate and the Manager of the Boro of Hawthorne to discuss the project. We came out of the meeting with the blessing of the NYSW to proceed with the project and a willingness to extend our lease agreement on the station. The Boro manager was familiar with the project from our last meeting and said the town would also like the building moved. He was going to

present the project to the Mayor and Council and ask for their approval, which expected would probably come shortly. Once we have all the approvals in place it will be time to get down to the work of putting all the pieces together.

At this time we have the money we need to get the building moved off the corner but we are a long way away from having the monies we need to do the restoration work if we paid someone to do it. One way we will be able to spend less and get more is if we put together a dedicated group of volunteers from inside and outside the VRA

to do most of the work. Anyone who would like to be on this committee is asked to let anyone on the board know you are interested. The restoration is going to take a lot of effort and time but when the project is done we will be able to look back at what we did and realize that we helped preserve the station for generations to come to enjoy. Plus with the Joseph K. Weber Memorial Library inside we will be able to teach people about what railroading meant not only to Hawthorne but also to our nation.

A shot of Hawthorne Station taken during the 9th NYS&W Southern Division motorcar run on October 19, 2008.



Elections aren't over yet!

That's right, just when you have had enough of elections, you have one more important election to be involved with, the VRA election of Officers and one member of the Board of Directors for the 2009 calendar year. Nominations are now being accepted up to the end of the next VRA meeting for President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer as well as the Board of Directors' position. If you would like to be involved with shaping the VRA future please seriously consider placing our name in the hat for one of the positions. The work involves 8 meetings per year, the 4 regular membership meetings and the Officers / Directors meetings held one month prior to the regular membership meetings.

If you can think of someone else that you feel would be a good candidate, you can also suggest their name either in person at the next meeting or by email. Chris Vitz, Joe Mele, Justin Kerstner are the VRA Nominating Committee members. You can send an email to any of them with your name or another member's name.

Santa Train Arrives December 6th and 7th

By KC Smith

After a very successful 2007 Santa Train we have again decided to run the trains again in 2008. This year, as last, we will be running the trains out of the Mountain View Station in Wayne on December 6th and then on the 7th we will run out of the Glen Rock Boro Hall Station. Train times will be the same as the past, 10 AM 12 Noon and 2 PM on Saturday and 10:20 AM, 12:20 and 2:20 PM on Sunday. The trips on the 6th are being run as a fundraiser to help the URHS buy fencing to protect Boonton Yard. The trips on the 7th are being run for our projects, like Hawthorne Station and others.

To get to the point where we will be ready to run the trains we have a lot of work to do. We have over 3000 tickets to sell and thanks to our computerized ticketing system we need less help at the station, but we still do need help. On Tuesday and Thursday nights between 6 and 9 PM and then on Saturday and Sunday between 12 Noon and 4 PM we will be staffing the station to answer questions and take orders from those customers without computers. Anyone who would like to help out is asked to call the station, 973-238-0555 or send an e-mail to vra-trips@yahoo.com

vra-trips@yahoo.com and say the days you can help.

Then on train days we need a crew of up to 12 to staff the train, 2 or 3 on the platform and a few in the parking lots. On top of that we need people who will be the entertainment for the kids. That means we need 3 Santa's, 3 Mrs. Santa's, 3 Elves and 3 or 4 people to put on our cartoon characters costumes. That is a total of up to 30 volunteers each day to make these trains a success. In the past we have recruited our friends, relatives and even people from school and work to put on a costume and we will probably need to do that again. Do be embarrassed, go ahead and ask. I can tell you from personal experience that when I put on a Santa suit for Tri-State last year I found it to be one of the most rewarding things I have ever done. When I asked one little girl what she wanted for Christmas that precious little girl said, "I want my Grandma to get better". I realized after hearing those 7 words, that while we are running these trains for a number of good causes the best cause is to bring the spirit of Christmas to everyone on board.

Please call the station at 973-238-0555 or e-mail the committee at vra-trips@yahoo.com and say you want to volunteer to help make this year's train another success for our group and a great time for the families who ride with us.



Fall Motorcar Trips

By K.C. Smith & Christopher Vitz

Again this year we ran 2 weekends of fall trips over 2 lines of the NYS&W in New York and New Jersey and again we added new trackage for people to ride.

On September 20th and 21st we ran the Syracuse line between Cortland and Syracuse on Saturday, and Cortland and Binghamton on Sunday. The weekend actually began on Friday night with our second of three NORAC classes and test given by Joe White from the NYSW. Everyone passed the test and learned a lot about running on the railroad. Saturday morning saw us setting the cars on at the Suit-Koat plant in Cortland and, after a safety meeting, we backed out and headed North for a run up to Syracuse and Armory Square station. Most participants walked down into the city and had lunch while others stayed at the station talking, working on their cars and having lunch they brought along with them. The scenery in that part of NY is mostly farmland and rolling hills and was very enjoyable. We then headed back to Cortland where we were able to leave our cars on the rails overnight.

Sunday proved to be an historic day, thanks to the help of northern division manager Joe White. Joe was so impressed by our group from what he saw at our NORAC class in New Jersey he offered to pilot our group over the CP and into the NYSW yard in Binghamton. While the total distance added to the run was probably less than 5 miles, the chance to get down into the yard and over the CP was the highlight of the

weekend. After an uneventful run back to Cortland we loaded up the cars and headed home tired and happy.

Then on October 18th and 19th we ran our 9th run over the NYSW Southern Division. The weekend started on the evening of the 17th with Craig Hartman offering his home as our classroom for the final NORAC testing opportunity. It was a very comfortable setting, and Craig and Shirley kept everyone attentive with drinks and fresh popcorn. Joe again told us how impressed he was with us, and informed us that he had made contact with the Reading and Northern to ask if we could run on that line in 2009. Stay tuned for further details! Saturday morning at 7 AM we were at the yard in Riverdale to set the cars on.

After a brief safety meeting and getting our famous flaggers out on the road we backed out and then headed north towards Warwick NY. We stopped at the famous lookout above Franklin NJ to enjoy the scenery and then ran to Vernon for Lunch. When we were all full we ran the last few miles to Baird's farm in Warwick and turned the cars. On the way home we ran down the end of the Limecrest Industrial track adding some rare mileage for those who have never ridden that part of the line before. We then returned to Riverdale to park the cars and head off to the Hartman's Hobo Party. With the spread that was put out by the ladies of the group any hobo who made it went home full and happy.

Sunday saw us run east down to Little

Ferry yard, but not before stopping at Hawthorne station to show everyone what we have done in the building and to use the bathroom. After the stop we headed down into the City of Paterson, still something not many motorcar trips get to experience. After successfully crossing the many crossings in the city we ran non-stop down to Little Ferry Yard for lunch. Thanks to the efforts of our member Frank Eichenlaub, who is also a Trainmaster at the NYSW, after lunch we were able to get down through the CSX Inter-model yard and up onto the old NYSW Edgewater Branch. This line used to cross under the Palisades in a tunnel but the track was cut back to just short of the western end of the tunnel about 20 years ago.

We were able to walk down and take a look at the tunnel, something not many people get the chance to do anymore. For many it was the highlight of the trip. With a train only an hour away from entering the CSXI yard we cut our visit to the tunnel short and ran down the branch and then onto one of the only operating turntables in NJ and turned the cars. We got done just in time to be out of the way of the train as it entered the yard. We then headed west back to Riverdale to get the cars off the rails and everyone on their way back home.

And so ended our 2008 motorcar operating season. All in all it was a great weekend and we are looking forward to running these and other railroads in 2009.

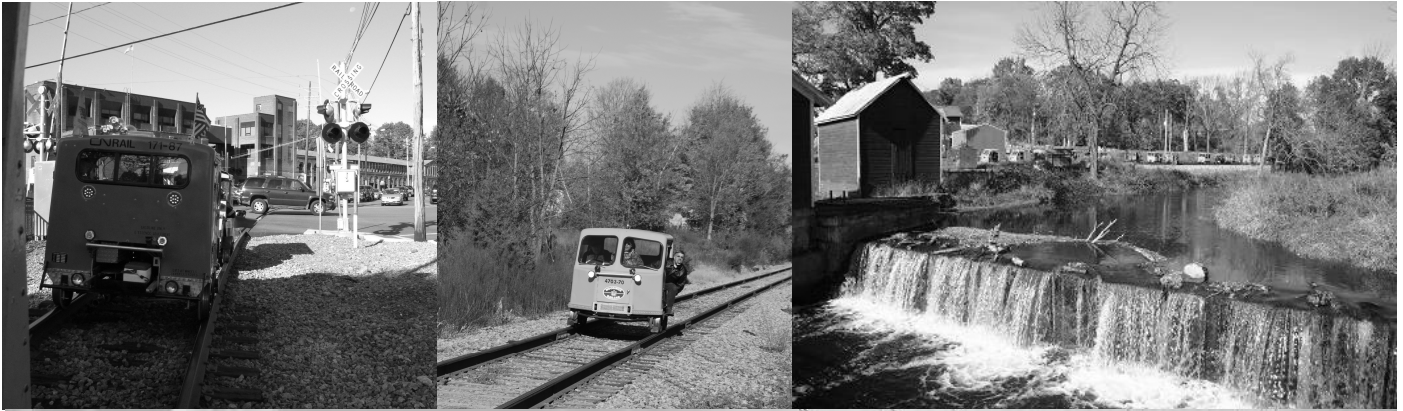


Left: Motorcars and NYS&W 3018
In Little Ferry Yard
October 19, 2008



Right: A brief stop at QD in Binghamton
September 21, 2008

*Top Row: Park Pl., Butler NJ; VRA Woodings Railcar operated by KC Smith; Waterfall at Baird's Farm, Warwick NY
Bottom Row: A stop at QD, Binghamton; Sparta Mountain over looking Franklin NJ*



*Top Row: Yard Switching in Boonton with the URHS; Autumn Lights Festival, West Milford, NJ
Bottom Row: Left & Right—Speeders from the NYS&W Southern Division Run; Center—Justin, Craig & Ken “jump start” the switcher in Boonton*



President's Report

As I sit here and reflect over the passing of summer, many things go through my mind as to what the VRA has accomplished in the short two years I have been privileged to be your President.

The VRA has expanded its membership and it's outreach to the railroading community, making the ability to do more events and work even easier (harder?). We have participated in much work on the CMRR to help open up more line and brush clearing on existing trackage, railroad days at the BRW, work with the URHS in car maintenance, yard maintenance, the obtaining of a place to call "home" for their RR equipment, a place to put our 40' container for storage and more, The 40B saga continues, although at a slower pace until I get some more inside work area cleared for the winter, come on out and give a hand if you are able.

The club has also outgrown the station, and moved our meetings to a much more spacious and comfortable area in a church nearby, so let's keep growing!

We have also run three successful railcar excursions this summer, and are hoping to add a fourth

in the coming year. Again, thanks to our flagging teams for another year of work to speed our excursions on their way!

The Hawthorne Station Project is well on its way to reality, and hope to have an expanded update at this month's meeting. A big thank you to KC for his work on keeping this project on track!

Another big thank you goes to Paul Trabert for his seemingly tireless work on organizing, cataloging and arranging the JKW Library so as to make it more usable and accessible.

The other big item of note is our Santa and Easter Bunny Trains. With KC and Charles spearheading the ticketing and logistics, I am confident of another sell out this year. We still need volunteers for staffing and characters, so be a part of this to make this another great time for both us and the kids!!!! With myself as Santa, and my wife as The Easter Bunny, we can share many experiences of the trips together. The other Santa and EBs I am sure could add their own experiences as well. Be a part of our major fundraiser and volunteer for one or both days, you will be glad you did!

This is my last year to be able to run as your President, and I am hoping for your support as we go for another great year as the Volunteer Railroaders Association. See you at the meeting!!!

Craig W. Hartman

YOUR President of the VRA



August 2008: CMRR and VRA members after a long day mowing and clearing nearly 11 miles of track.

KC Smith with the VRA's MT-19



Tim Kane and Justin Kerstner during a VRA work night



VOLUNTEER RAILROADERS ASSOCIATION

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Hawthorne, NJ 07506
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

The last general membership meeting of 2008 will be held on November 20th at St. Clements Church, 271 Lafayette Ave in Hawthorne. The meeting will take place in the Parish Hall located in the rear of the building. The main parking lot is easily accessible from Grand Ave. and is within sight of the station. Please visit vratrips.org for directions. We will start at 7:30 pm and will follow with entertainment. Members with slides of current events are encouraged to bring them along to add to the show. As always, guests are welcome.



Andrea and Robert photograph an on-coming CSX train. October 19, 2008

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