

VOLUNTEER RAILROADERS ASSOCIATION



SPRING 2009

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PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS

Hello fellow railroaders! Another quarter has gone by, and much has been going on since then. The VRA has once again completed a successful Easter Bunny Run, going out of two different locations, going over Moodna Viaduct, and having a great time for all in doing so. We also learned a lot as far as for future runs are concerned, and will implement them on our next excursion, so start thinking now about how you can participate in the Santa Train, it is never too early!

Another great thing is the long awaited station move is coming closer to reality. Meetings and contacts with both the town and NYSW have been positive, and we are looking forward to the momentous move in the near future. Say tuned. As I write this, the VRA has also had another good turnout at the Station for National Train Day. Though the day started out dark and dreary with the threat of precipitation, it turned out to be a good day. We were able to show off the station, future plans, operate a train simu-

lator, look thru our library and disseminate much information about the VRA and our goals, with several people expressing interest in joining the VRA. I also went home with an empty pot of Hobo Stew, as it was a big hit this year with several people asking for the "secret" recipe.

The 40B project is once again on track, and help is definitely needed! I want to finish this long overdue project so we can show her off, so let's roll. YOUR help is much needed, so watch your e-mails for updates.

If you think you don't have mechanical aptitude, you won't know unless you try!

The M&NJ has been purchased by another shortline RR, and is not dead. They are re-opening crossings, and plan to be around for a while while searching out new customers and sources of revenue. I have been in touch with the new owners, who appear to be friendly to us, and a face-to-face meeting is in the works.

The CMRR is looking forward to another work weekend with us to put a

siding in Ashokan so as to allow the crane that currently fouls the track to be moved into the siding so as to allow a run from Phoenecia to Kingston, WOW! Watch and listen for more updates as they come.

Many members are also working on their own railcars and getting them ready for the VRAs trips this year, with the SD runs going off at the end of June this year. Hartman's RR Shops have been busy indeed!

Think we have enough to do? If we are to be successful this summer will require work from ALL of us to make it happen.

Again, thank you to all who do sacrifice and help to make us the success we are!

More to come at the Meeting, so see you there!!!

Craig W. Hartman
Your President
of the VRA

MEETING:

Thursday, May 21, 2009
St. Clements Church
271 Lafayette Ave
Hawthorne NJ 07506

Meeting starts at 7:30 pm and will be followed by a short presentation of Railroad History.

If you would like a hard copy of this newsletter mailed to you, please email Carolyn Hoffman at ch2112@gmail.com.

Copies will be available at the meeting as well.

EASTER TRAIN WRAP-UP

2009 brought us another year of Easter Bunny Trains with this years trains being run entirely for our effort to move Hawthorne Station. Planning started months before the trips with advertising and sales kicking in at about the 8 week to go mark. We worked out with NJT to add another car to the train and so now we had 7 cars to sell on each trip. Over the 2 days of trips that equated to having another whole train to sell, which made some nervous. Well with 2 weeks to go we had sold out Sundays trips and a week later we sold out Saturdays, so much for the worries and so much for an economic slowdown.

This year we added a new route for our Sunday ride, when we were approved to run the trains up and over Moodna Viaduct. To make it to the viaduct we also

needed to move our departure point to Ramsey, which we thought would be more convenient as well. Little did we know the problems Ramsey would create. On Saturday we also chose a new starting point, the new Rt. 23 Transit Center in Wayne, which was less than a mile from Mountain View.

Saturday's trip went well with only a minor parking problem on the first trip. But quick thinking fixed the problem and the rest of the day went very well. We ran basically on time and everyone on board had a good time.

Sunday did not go as smoothly. NJT had informed us just days before the trips that we would not be able to run over Moodna on the first trip. Then the parking garage that we thought would be great was not even close to good. Con-

BY: KC SMITH

fusion about ticket validation and paying for parking created a problem. Then our boarding platform was changed twice during the day and to top it off we had to unload and load on the same platform between the second and third trips, what a nightmare.

We did make it over Moodna twice our on board crew and all the characters did a great job, but the problems over shadowed all the good we did. This is the first time in all our years of running that we had such problems and we learned a lot from the problems. Our committee has already been working on how to never run into those problems again and how to deal with such issues in the future. As always we are looking to put on the best event we can and make all our passengers happy.

MOTORCAR TRIPS 2009

BY: K.C. SMITH

This year we are planning on running at least 3 and maybe 4 weekends of motorcar trips. The first will be a 2-day run over the NYS&W Southern Division June 27th and 28th. On Saturday the participants will travel approximately 100 round-trip miles between Riverdale, NJ and Warwick, NY. On Sunday we will run approximately 60 round-trip miles between Riverdale, NJ and North Bergen, NJ. Operators and riders under 18 are not permitted by the railroad. Trip fee of \$120.00 per car. Lunch will be on your own at a sit down restaurant on Saturday, On Sunday we are planning on a deli sandwich lunch for an additional \$9.00 per person.

These trips we will again be looking for volunteers to help flag crossings so the motorcars do not have to stop and flag. Anyone over 18 who would like to help is asked to e-mail us at vra-trips@yahoo.com or call the station at 973-238-0555 and say you want to help.

Then on a September 12th and 13th,

2009 we will sponsor a 2-day run over the NYS&W Utica and Syracuse Branches. Participants will travel approximately 84 round-trip miles on Saturday between Sherburne, NY and Utica, NY. Lunch will be on your own at a convenient location near Utica. Sunday we will be running approximately 70 miles roundtrip from Cortland, NY to Port Dickinson, NY, lunch will be deli sandwiches for an additional \$9.00 per person. We will be stopping at convenient locations for bathroom breaks. Operators and riders under 18 are not permitted by the railroad. The trip fee is \$120.00 per car.

The NYS&W requires that ALL operators must pass a Northeast Operating Rules Advisory Committee (NORAC) guidelines training class and test prior to the event. If you have a current NORAC certification please mail us copies that we can forward to the railroad. A class will be offered Friday night prior to the next day's trip. To attend the event operators MUST attend the class and pass the test. If you have attended a previous class and have

a current NORAC certification you will not need to attend.

On October 4th, 2009 we have a tentative date set to host a 1-day run over the Stourbridge Railroad. Participants will travel approximately 50 round-trip miles along the scenic Lackawaxen River on Sunday between Honesdale, PA and Lackawaxen, PA. Lunch will be at Lackawaxen, PA. We will be stopping at convenient locations for bathroom breaks. The trip fee is \$55.00 per car. To break even on this trip we need 22 cars to attend. If we do not have that many signed up 30 days in advance of the trip it will be cancelled and any collected fees will be returned.

We are also working on running trips over the Catskill Mountain Railroad and the Cooperstown and Charlotte Valley Railroad. Dates for these trips are not yet set, but should be shortly. Watch our web site, www.vratrrips.org, for updates or to sign up and pay for the trips.

HAWTHORNE STATION UPDATE...

BY: KC SMITH

After many years of work we have finally been able to make real progress in getting the station moved. We have been working very closely with the Boro of Hawthorne and the NYS&W Railway and with just a little more work we should be able to get going on the work. We have a proposed lease in the hands of the Boro and after they have made any changes they need we will forward the lease onto the railroad. We also have all of the drawings made and will forward them to the railroad for approval as well.

Our plans call for the station to be moved about 75 feet north and away from the corner where it has been damaged many times over the years. New to the plan is a full basement, which will allow us a large amount of storage, something we have never had. Inside

the station we will continue to have our Joseph K. Weber Library as well as our railroad museum and ticket office. We have also offered to the Boro space in the back room to be used as a Hawthorne Museum.

Outside the station we still plan to build a park, complete with benches, shrubs, walking path (made of fundraiser bricks) and maybe even a garden railroad. We also plan on restoring the exterior of the building to look much like it did when it was built. The only real change will be the addition of the north side of the building to house the stairs going down to the basement and the AC unit. This addition will be built to match the look of the station and to look like it was always there.

We know that the purists in our hobby will take exception to what we have

planned, but because the station was so heavily modified in the past it will never be able to be what it once was. By making the changes we have planned the station will be able to serve the community for 100 more years and in many more ways. Everyone is invited to stop by the station and see the plans.

As I have written in the past, we will need lots of people to help do the restoration work after the station is moved. We will need to strip the paint, restore the wood, replace the windows, replace the roof, re-paint the building, build the park and lots more. The more volunteer hours we spend the less money we will have to spend. Watch your e-mail for announcements on the progress and for work days. Like our slogan says... So Close to Railroading, Only the Paycheck is Missing.

THE RIGHT TIME, THE RIGHT PEOPLE

BY: JON BERKEMEYER

I've been interested in trains my whole life. My first reliable memory of trains was the reactivation of the NYS&W main west of Butler. One day a GP18 (I think it was 1802) showed up at the Echo Lake Road crossing, and I was bitten by the bug. As the line was rehabbed and stack traffic began to increase, any time my father spotted a train; it was an event for us, much to the chagrin of my mother. This was the beginning of my fascination with trains and my love of the NYS&W.

One day, many years later (22 years to be precise), I was surfing the web when I came across a message on railroad.net from Chris Vitz asking for volunteers to flag the motor car trip in 3 weeks. I had seen him post the previous two years, however back then I was coming off a 'break-up' with another railfan group and was still wary about participating with another one. For some reason, this time I took the plunge. I had planned on

showing up, riding on Saturday, and returning the favor by flagging on Sunday, nothing more.

When I arrived to the set on point Saturday morning, I wasn't sure what to expect. The first person I met was K.C. Smith. He was busy, but was very nice to me. I had a blast that day. I got to see the line from a perspective I had never had before, I even was able to lecture the guys I rode with on the history of the various points we passed. The day went by way to quickly! The next morning, bright and early I arrived to fulfill my flagging obligation. I was nervous about screwing up. But the coaching by K.C. and Chris was very helpful, and it enabled me to do something I'd like to think I'm very good at, chase a train, albeit this one was a lot different. This was the day where my thinking started to change. Since I was a member of the team that day, I got to see first hand how the VRA functioned and how the

members interacted. I was quickly impressed. When we returned to Riverdale, I was sold. I joined that night.

Fast forward a little bit. Unfortunately my personal life had hit the derail. My wife and I separated at the beginning of 2009. I was deeply saddened and totally stressed out. In an effort to distract myself from the problem at hand, I volunteered to staff the station for the Easter Bunny trips as much as possible. It has helped a lot. Since I've become an active member I have started building good friendships, and have had a lot of fun. I plan on being with the VRA for a long time to come. I'm getting more involved, and I'm hoping to run for an office or one of the director seats in the fall. It's funny to think, that a year ago I didn't want anything to do with an organized rail group, now today I'm not so sure where I'd be without one.



VOLUNTEER RAILROADERS ASSOCIATION

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A shot of the view from Sparta Mountain on the 2008 NYS&W Southern Division Trip as taken by Chris Vitz. The 2009 Run is coming up fast!

Visit www.VRATrips.org to register.

URHS WEST BOONTON YARD BY: CAROLYN HOFFMAN

There has been a lot of activity in the URHS' West Boonton Yard this spring. Frequent Saturdays (and more than a few evenings for some!) have put the yard in very good shape for their second Open House.

Jeff Kociban put a lot of time into matching the original Blue Comet colors for the NJT-1. He has spray painted one side to match its original paint scheme, as well as touched up the EMD E-8 #4253 in its NJDOT scheme.

The volunteer turnout most Saturdays has been quite good. All three utility carts have been

primed and re-painted safety yellow. The largest now has railings and chairs for passengers! For a small donation, visitors will be able to ride behind the VRA's A5 "Brush Hog" passed the equipment further down the line.

KC Smith, Steve Gerritsen & spent a very warm day fashioning a better system to get our motorcars out of the container. They worked in the 90 degree sun lugging and cutting ties to form a cross over that can be used much more effectively. That evening, just 3 of us were able to get the Woodings and MT-19 out and running with

minimal struggling.

Justin Kerstner and Steve Gerritsen have spent many hours on the GE 100-ton switcher engine, from oil changes to rewiring, and it's running beautifully.

The work session on March 14th saw the GG-1 & Reading Caboose moved up to the front of the yard with the newly running PSE&G #100. A few weeks later, after a spectacular cleaning by Steve, the GP-7 made it's way up as well.

The Open House will be Saturday, May 23, 2009. For more information please visit www.urhs.org.



URHS President Rich Copeland watches as Billy Smith & Steve Gerritsen conduct the switching operations on March 14, 2009

Picture by Jeff Kociban