

## VOLUNTEER RAILROADERS ASSOCIATION



# THE DIGEST

2009  
MOTOR CAR EDITION

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### PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS

I can't believe another quarter has gone by, the days just keep going faster and faster. The VRA has already had the Southern Division run, and it was a great time as usual. Turning on the turntable is neat, and seeing the snapping turtle in the water underneath proved it wasn't a fairy tale, but real. We had a well attended Hobo party at our home afterward, and as usual, Shirley and the girls did a great job, I certainly don't think anyone went home hungry.

I just got back from a NERCA run on the Upper Hudson, and it was a great run, made better with the attendance of our Son and daughter in law (who both thought the poppers "stinky").

The 40B project is underway again, and some has been accomplished. The next to do is retrieve the engine from storage at Jeff's place, and install it and the driveline, then continue on to the bodywork. Please come out to help with this great project.

The station move is progressing as we have several bids in, and expecting a final bid by the Board meeting so to get this project done, again, much help is needed and will be needed.

The URHS and the CMRR also both need our help, so volunteer to help these guys and gals as well. Think we are stretched thin enough? Want more work? I've got it! Clone us all for more help, no really, Santa Train is coming, and the planning starts now! Omi-gosh!

I feel it is great to work with such a great group of people, so let's just keep 'er going! See you at the meeting

**Craig W. Hartman**  
Your President  
of the VRA



The parade of motor cars ready for the run east to Little Ferry

*Photo by: Steve Gerritsen*



NYS&W engineer and trip pilot Steve Weiss stands by to throw a switch in Little Ferry yard during the recent VRA motor car trip.

*Photo: Jon Berkemeyer*

### MEETING:

*Thursday, August 20th, 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 Jon Berkemeyer at [berkemeyerjj@yahoo.com](mailto:berkemeyerjj@yahoo.com).

Copies will be available at the meeting as well.

## URHS REPORT

The URHS has had a number of changes come its way in the last few months. First the President, Rich Copeland, sold his house and moved to Florida. This left a big hole but Rich offered to stay on as President and so what he can via phone and e-mail to see that we stay on track. In the President's absents the URHS by-laws call for the Secretary, who happens to be me, to stand in for the President at the monthly meetings. I have also assumed more responsibility in other areas to try and fill the gap. Because I need to run the meeting it was decided to appoint a recording Secretary and our alternate to the URHS, Joe Mele, volunteered and was appointed to fill the position until next years election. Thanks Joe.

Because the URHS board felt it needed to have someone to be able to

meet with agencies like New Jersey Transit it was decided to elect an Executive Vice President and someone many of us all know, Ken Brown, was chosen to fill the office. Ken is a long time VRA member and has worked on many projects. He represents the Black River Railroad Historic Trust at URHS meetings and serves as a volunteer at the railroad. Ken is a welcome addition to the board and I am confident he will do a great job representing the URHS.

The main project the URHS is currently working on is the equipment in and security of Boonton yard. A request has been made to extend the lease from NJ Transit currently held by the URHS for the yard. This request was made because of the tens of thousands of dollars that will need to be spent to fence in the yard and to build a restoration shop.

Even if that extension cannot be negotiated it has become very clear that if we want to protect the equipment in the yard a fence must be built. VRA members are part of the very active volunteer base that has been working on the equipment in the yard. Work parties are held at least every other weekend with announcements made on our Yahoo group, so be sure to watch your e-mail. If you are not a member of our Yahoo Group, you can visit our web site, [www.vratrips.org](http://www.vratrips.org), click on "links" and then look for the "VRA Yahoo! Group home" listing and click to join.

Once the fencing is in place the URHS plans to bring a number of pieces of equipment currently undergoing restoration in Lebanon NJ. This will allow this equipment to be completed and put on display and in some cases into opera-

## UP COMING MOTORCAR TRIPS 2009

After running a successful 2 days of trips on the NYS&W's Southern Division (see story elsewhere in this newsletter) we are now looking forward to 2 more weekends of trips this fall. The first will be on the NYS&W's Northern Division on September 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>. The plans for this trip have gone through a few changes since we first announced them back in the spring, but I am happy to say that I think we have a great weekend set up for all those who join us.

On Saturday the 12<sup>th</sup> we will set on at Suit-cote in Cortland, the same location we have used for the last few years. But this year we have a number of changes sure to make for an exciting weekend. We plan on running south to Chenango Forks where we will need to clear the main so that the north bound (SU-99) can pass us by. The plan is to get the cars onto the now out of service Utica Main at the Forks and run north. This track has been out of service for about 4 years because of numerous

washouts on the line. The track in intact for quite a number of miles north of the Forks and we will be running all the track we can.

After the SU-99 passes our plan is to run down into Binghamton yard and have lunch. After lunch we will run back north to Cortland where those who wish will be able to set their cars off. For the rest of the participants we will be offer a late afternoon / early evening run up towards Syracuse. The mileage we get to cover will depend on time and train traffic, but we are hoping we can make it to at least Jamesville. When we get back to Cortland everyone will set off and get ready for the next days run on the Utica side.

Sunday we plan on setting on at Sherburn and running north up to Utica. We will visit Utica Union Station, maybe catch a CSX train or 2, then head down the old O&W / West Shore line for lunch. We are working on a side trip down to the stone quarry, a line we have never run on. Like Saturday when we

get back to the set off point we will let those who wish to set off to do so, the rest of us will head south onto more out of service track. This trackage is on the north side of the washouts from the track we ran on Saturday and is track we have not run on in many years.

All in all we are looking forward to 2 great days on the rails and encourage anyone with a motorcar to join us. To sign up for these or any other runs just visit our web site [www.vratrips.org](http://www.vratrips.org) and click on the "motorcar trips" button.

*(Story Continues page 6)*



VRA owned Woodings car on the Lodi Industrial  
Photo: Steve Gerritsen

BY: K.C. SMITH

BY: K.C. SMITH

## HAWTHORNE STATION UPDATE

After many years of talking, planning, meetings and working we have finally gotten to the point where we are negotiating a long term lease with the NYS&W for Hawthorne station. The plans have always been to move the station away from the corner and the trucks that have struck the roof for many years. In recent years we have altered the plan to include a railroad library named in honor of our founding member Joseph K. Weber. We then offered the Borough of Hawthorne space in the back area to be used as a town museum. Recently we came to the decision to add a full basement to allow for storage of the many of the items we currently store in the attic. To access the basement we have designed a small addition to the back (North side) of the station, which will house a full set of stairs along with the gas meter and AC

unit.

The proposed lease is currently in the hands of the railroad along with copies of the drawings that were made up by our member and volunteer Lou DiGeronimo. Lou has donated all of his services through his architectural firm to see that this project is not only done, but done right. I cannot thank Lou and his team enough for all they have done. If anyone ever needs an architect I hope you will consider using Lou. With any luck the NYS&W will accept our proposed lease and drawings for the proposed work and we can get to the dirty work of moving the building. Once that happens we are not only going to need lots of volunteer help to get everything done, but we are also going to need to raise more funds to do the restoration work on the building and to complete

BY: K.C. SMITH

the pocket park on the sight where the building currently stands.

We will be looking for donations from individuals, companies and for possible grants from charitable and governmental agencies. If anyone has any contacts or knowledge to meet these needs please let me know.

It is my hope that by the time our meeting rolls around on August 20<sup>th</sup> we will be able to announce a start date for the project. Keep your fingers crossed.



BY: K.C. SMITH

## SANTA TRAIN 2009

Yes it is getting close to that time of year again, I know that it is still hot and sticky outside but the planning has begun for the 2009 version of our popular Santa Trains. We have requested the first weekend in December, the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>, for this years trips. We are going to give the Wayne Route 23 Transit Center and the Ramsey Rt. 17 station another try, that is if we get some assurances from NJT that we will not have a repeat of the situations we had at Easter.

As you may remember while the Rt. 23 station gave us a challenge or two the Rt. 17 station was almost a nightmare. To help correct the problems at Rt. 17 we have a few corrective measures we are planning to undertake. The first is that we have not requested any specific times for our trains, just that we have 3 trains each day. We have also purchased 6 new radios so now we have 12, which should allow communi-

cations to be greatly enhanced. One other change will be that we will need more volunteers on the platforms and in the parking areas. This should allow us to better handle situations as they come up and not put our passengers in uncomfortable situations.

This is where you come in, we need you to volunteer. I know that riding the train is probably the most fun but running an enjoyable, memorable and safe trip for our passengers is more important. We have had the good fortune to raise lots of money for very worthy railroad historical purposes in the past and without our passengers we could have never done that. So I ask you all to keep December 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> open on your calendars and to come out and make our 2009 Santa Trains the best that they can be.

These trips will be used to raise the funds we need to work on Haw-

thorne station. Past trips have raised the money we have to move the building and build its foundation. This year's money will be used to restore the exterior of the building to how it may have looked back in the early 1900's. Once completed the building will become the centerpiece of Hawthorne's downtown revival. Come out and volunteer and you can say you helped make that happen.

To volunteer please write to [vratrips@yahoo.com](mailto:vratrips@yahoo.com) and say you want to help.

## MOTOR CAR WEEKEND ON THE NYS&W

*(Editors note: This article was submitted to Railpace Magazine and should appear later this year.)*

In late June, the Volunteer Railroaders Association (VRA) hosted a North American Rail Car Operators Association (NARCOA) motorcar excursion on the New York Susquehanna & Western (NYS&W) Southern Division, piloted by NYS&W Engineer, and VRA founding member, Steve Weiss

The VRA is a non-profit organization made up of volunteers who devote their time into the restoration, and preservation of historic railroad equipment. This involves a variety of fundraising efforts including everything from running Santa and Easter trains to motorcar trips. In addition, they own and operate four motorcars, which include a Woodings CBL, Fairmont MT-19, Fairmont A-5, and an extremely rare Lehigh & New England Railroad Sheffield model 40B.

The VRA's volunteers have come to the organization for many reasons one of which is to donate their time to flag grade crossings for motorcar trips. Most of these new volunteers have decided to become active members because of the excitement they felt from being a part of a wonderful experience. Many don't just serve on a single trip but come back time after time to volunteer for numerous trips. "Justin and I started out as a

flag team in October of 2007, we loved the camaraderie and when saw the motorcars we said we had to get one they are just so cool," said Carolyn Hoffman, now the Treasurer for the VRA. The VRA's most recent trip began at the Riverdale trans-load facility, located on the ex-Erie Greenwood Lake Division. Because of the complexity of their trips, the VRA uses 2 excursion coordinators Chris Vitz (who handles registrations and inspections) and K.C. Smith (who handles the flaggers and motorcar operations) and they set up a magnificent event.

On the first day, riding west, the parade of motorcars made several stops. The first was Sparta Station, *(The new owner of Sparta Station and the entire AO Polymer complex is Mr. Bill Dermody and his family. They hope to eventually restore the station)*. It was then on to Vernon for a very nice sit down lunch (rare on most motorcar trips) at The George Inn. The final destination was the famous Baird's Farm in Warwick NY where the cars were turned at the crossing for the return trip. Eastern Propane's President, Robert Nicholson was a guest on the run and as a thank you for his support, a trip was made down the Limecrest Industrial to view the businesses in Sparta and run to the end of track. The excursion then backed out of the branch and headed east arriving back at Riverdale around 6:30PM. Immediately following the run the VRA's President and his wife hosted their annual Hobo Picnic at their home in Kinnelon, NJ.

Day 2 would find everyone headed east through Bergen and Passaic counties including a run through the city of Paterson. There

BY ALLYSON SMITH

are very few runs in the country that travel through the countless crossings and city sights that Paterson has to offer. The first stop of the day was made to get the cars onto the NYS&W's Lodi Industrial for what was a first (and maybe only) trip down to the Rt. 17 crossing. Once everyone got their pictures, they worked their way back to the main line and a stop at Maywood to enjoy lunch at Giuseppe's Deli, and visit the open house being held by the Maywood Station Historical Committee. Photos including the former NYS&W 206 (Alco S-2) and some of the motorcars were taken, before the cars moved onto Little Ferry yard. The cars then went up onto the Edgewater Branch where participants were able to view the western portal of the abandoned tunnel that once brought trains through the Palisades to the Hudson River in Edgewater, NJ. The run then returned to the yard to have the cars spun on the only operating turntable in northern New Jersey. When the last car was turned the run began to make their way back toward Riverdale stopping at the Ridgefield Park station where they had a meet with a CSX train; every rail fans dream. The last stop of the day before returning to Riverdale was the NYS&W's Hawthorne Station.

# MOTOR CAR WEEKEND ON THE NYS&W



Steve Weiss and K.C. Smith conduct the safety meeting.

*Photo: Jon Berkemeyer*



A line of motor cars stopped at Woodruff's Gap.

*Photo: Carolyn Hoffman*



Billy Smith owns and operates the first functioning Tamper TMC-2 in New Jersey.

*Photo: Charles Smith*



Steve Gerritsen crosses the Hackensack River with the VRA owned MT-19 car.

*Photo: Charles Smith*



Flagger Louis Lokuta stopping traffic at Cross Street.

*Photo: Jon Berkemeyer*



The last group of motor cars come to a stop at the end of the Edgewater Branch.

*Photo: Steve Gerritsen*

  
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The participants of motor car trip stopped at Sparta Station for a group shot.

*Photo: Charles Smith*

## UP COMING MOTORCAR TRIPS 2009

BY: K.C. SMITH

*(continued from Page 2)*

Then on October 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> we are planning trips on 2 lines in NY and PA sure to offer great fall scenery. The trip on the 3<sup>rd</sup> is in the planning stages but we are looking to run the Catskill Mountain Railroad from Phonicia to just a few miles short of Kingston. This will be all the available trackage on the CMRR and will be over trackage that we had a small part in helping to open up. When the details have been worked out we will post the information on our website.

On October 4<sup>th</sup> we have lined up to run on

the Stourbridge Line from Honesdale to Lackawaxen. We need to meet a 22-car minimum to be able to pay the fees requested for the run. Since this is the first time this line will be run in many years (a washout closed the line at Hawley a number of years back) we are hopeful we will get the cars we need. We will have lunch at Lackawaxen, be able to visit the Robeling Bridge and enjoy the scenery along the Lackawaxen and Delaware Rivers. Be sure not to miss this great weekend and for you new operators we should be able to mentor you during this weekend, so sign up soon.



K.C. Smith and Diana Abboud turn a motor car at Bard's farm in Warwick, NY.

*Photo: Charles Smith*