

The Black Diamond

Official Newsletter of the Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society

MARCH 2004

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

This spring will be a busy time for the Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society. The March 2004 edition of "The Black Diamond" features full details about all upcoming Society events. Our group will be sponsoring Easter Bunny train excursions in April and the Finger Lakes Railway Railfan's Day in May. This issue also includes news about the Santa train excursions and the Society elections along with a feature article titled "The Cornfield Meet" by member Paul S. Worboys. Please send any Society news and/or historical articles about Finger Lakes area railroads to me by U. S. Mail at P. O. Box RR, Manchester, NY 14504 or by e-mail at kemay59@hotmail.com. Thank you for your contributions.

Ken May, Editor

SANTA TRAIN EXCURSIONS REPEAT SUCCESS!

The Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society, in cooperation with the Finger Lakes Scenic Railway, sponsored Santa train excursions over the former New York Central "Auburn Road" railroad line between Shortsville and Canandaigua on Friday, November 28, and Saturday, November 29, 2003. Ten passenger train excursions were operated over the weekend from Shortsville to Canandaigua and return over the Finger Lakes Railway using two diesel locomotives and two passenger coaches. Each train ride lasted one hour and was an 11 mile round trip.

A total of 1084 passengers rode the trains over two days – 482 on Friday and 602 on Saturday. Four out of the ten round trips were sold out. The average passenger count per train was 108.

Paid ads were placed in the Daily Messenger, the Democrat and Chronicle, and the Genesee Valley Pennysaver. Press releases were published in the Courier-Gazette, the Daily Messenger, the Democrat and Chronicle, the Finger Lakes Times, and on various Internet web sites. A free commercial produced by Jim Kerin appeared on Cable Channel 12 locally.

Thanks to Deb Halderman for handling all of the telephone inquiries along with retail and mail order sales. A total of 881 tickets were sold in advance. Tickets were sold by Country Corner in Phelps, Depot 25 Restaurant in Shortsville, Electric Train Co. in Victor, Five Seasons Gifts in Canandaigua, and Petal Pusher Florist in Manchester. Special thanks to these merchants for their help with ticket sales.

The Society freight station museum was open to passengers during the excursions. Sales at the gift shop staffed by Deb and Emma Halderman were good. The food concessions did a brisk business before and after each of the ten trips. Thanks to Bob and Nancy Ward for organizing the activities at the station.

As always, we received outstanding service and cooperation from the Finger Lakes Scenic Railway train crew comprised of Kevin Buckland, Trainmaster; Ken Maines, Engineer (Fri.); Dan Smith, Engineer (Sat.); Bruce Habberfield, Conductor; Bonnie Buckland, Snack Bar; Judy Habberfield, Gift Shop; and Adam Buckland; Helper.

Thank you to all of the Society members who assisted with the excursions in one way or another. Thanks to Joe Dickson, Bev Halderman, Karl Hixson, and Jack Tuttle for volunteering as parking lot attendants. Thanks to David and Roger Halderman for volunteering as boarding assistants.

Thanks to Dave Fleenor and Bill Young for volunteering as car hosts. I appreciate the Society's support of this fund-raising project and look forward to the Easter Bunny trains in April 2004.

Ken May, Excursion Coordinator

EASTER BUNNY TRAIN EXCURSIONS TO RUN AGAIN

The Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society, in cooperation with the Finger Lakes Scenic Railway, will sponsor Easter Bunny train excursions over the former New York Central "Auburn Road" railroad line between Shortsville and Clifton Springs on Saturday, April 10, 2004. Five passenger train excursions will be operated from Shortsville to Clifton Springs and return over the Finger Lakes Railway using two diesel locomotives and two passenger coaches. The Easter Bunny will be onboard the trains to visit with children. The Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society museum in the old New York Central freight station at 8 E. High St. in Shortsville will be open to passengers during the excursions.

Each train ride will last one hour and will be a 10 mile round trip. Departure times are 10:00 a.m., 11:30 a.m., 1:00 p.m., 2:30 p.m., and 4:00 p.m. All trains will load and unload at the LVRHRS station museum. The freight station is located one block south of Main St. in downtown Shortsville via Sheldon St. to E. High St. Free parking is available at this location.

Fares are \$10.00 per person for adults and children age 3 and over. Children under age 3 are free. The ticket price includes the train ride and admission to the museum. Ticket mail order forms can be obtained by calling 585-289-8022. Tickets may be purchased in person at the following merchants: Country Corner, 247 Main St., Phelps; Depot 25 Restaurant, 1 W. Main St., Shortsville; Electric Train Co., 2 W. Main St., Victor; Five Seasons Gifts, 1901 Rochester Rd., Canandaigua; and Petal Pusher Florist, 9 N. Main St., Manchester. If the rides are not sold out in advance, tickets will be available at the LVRHRS station museum at the time of the scheduled trip.

Snacks, beverages, and gift items will be sold at the station and onboard the trains. No smoking or alcohol is allowed. There are restrooms at the station and in each of the two passenger coaches. Passengers should dress appropriately for the weather because the coaches are not heated.

FINGER LAKES RAILWAY RAILFAN'S DAY

The Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society of Manchester, New York, will sponsor the first ever Railfan's Day on the Finger Lakes Railway on Saturday, May 15, 2004. An all-day special photographers passenger train excursion will be operated from Geneva, New York, to Solvay, New York, and return using two FGLK diesel locomotives painted in the New York Central "lightning stripe" paint scheme and two Finger Lakes Scenic Railway passenger coaches. There will be numerous photo stops during the ten hour, 100 mile round trip over the former New York Central "Auburn Road" railroad line through the Finger Lakes region of New York State. Fare for the train excursion will be \$50.00 per person. The trip is limited to 144 passengers. Passengers may bring their own food aboard the train. Beverages and snacks will be sold on board. The train will depart Geneva at 8:00 a.m. and will return at 6:00 p.m. There will be a night photo session at the FGLK enginehouse in Geneva conducted by Tom Trencansky at 9:00 p.m. Cost for the night photo session will be \$20.00 per person. The session is limited to 36 photographers. For a ticket order form, please send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to FGLK Railfan's Day, Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society, P. O. Box RR, Manchester, NY 14504-0200.

SOCIETY ELECTION RESULTS

Joe Dickson, Nominating Committee chairperson, reported the Society election results at the LVRHRS annual meeting on January 18, 2004. A total of 71 ballots were received. The results

were as follows: President – Ken May, 56 votes; Trustees – Dave Halderman, 59 votes; Bob Ward, 52 votes; Dave Fleenor, 27 votes. Dave Halderman and Bob Ward were declared the winners with the most votes for the two open trustee positions. Ken May vacated his trustee's position to accept the president's position. Dave Fleenor was nominated to fill the vacant trustee's position and was elected by secret ballot to complete Ken's term as trustee to expire on 12/31/05. Bob Ward then announced his resignation as trustee. Randy Darrow was nominated and approved to fill Bob's term as trustee to expire on 12/31/06. The amendment to the Society bylaws regarding honorary memberships was passed with 51 in favor and 6 opposed. Rita Gurewitch offered to take on the duties of the Secretary position vacated by Emma Halderman and was appointed Interim Acting Secretary for 2004. Congratulations to the new officers and trustees and thanks to the retiring officers and trustees for their service!

MUSEUM OPEN HOUSE DATES SET

The LVRRHS Station Museum in Shortsville will be open to the public one Saturday afternoon a month from May to October this year. Open house dates will be May 1, June 5, July 10, August 7, September 11, and October 2. Hours will be 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. A large collection of historical artifacts from area railroads is on display at the museum. The museum features a special exhibit about Lehigh Valley Railroad baseball teams by local educators Randy Darrow and Tim Munn. Admission is free; donations are welcome. All members are invited to stop in for a visit.

LVERRHS WINS PRIZE IN CHRISTMAS TREE DECORATING CONTEST

The Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society's entry in the Granger Homestead's 2003 Festival of Trees contest won the "Best Traditional Tree" prize. Our Christmas tree was titled "Santa Express." Congratulations to the Pattersons and the Wards for their decorating efforts!

WEB SITE STATUS

The LVRRHS web site at www.lvrrhs.org is still off line because of technical difficulties. We are working to get the site up and running again soon. Thank you for your patience.

NEW SOCIETY MEMBERS

Welcome aboard to the following new members: Randy Darrow, Rita Gurewitch, Bruce Habberfield, and Tim Munn.

UPCOMING LVRRHS EVENTS

April 10, 2004 – Easter Bunny train excursions

April 18, 2004 – LVRRHS meeting, 6:30 p.m.

May 1, 2004 – LVRRHS Station Museum Open House, 1-3 p.m.

May 15, 2004 – Finger Lakes Railway Railfan's Day

May 16, 2004 – LVRRHS meeting, 6:30 p.m.

Society meetings are held on the third Sunday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at the LVRRHS Station Museum, 8 E. High St., Shortsville, New York.

"The Black Diamond" is published by the Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society, P. O. Box RR, Manchester, NY 14504-0200. Displays and archives are located at 8 E. High St., Shortsville, NY. Hours by appointment. Contact Deb Halderman, Treasurer, at (585) 289-8022.

FEATURE ARTICLE - THE "CORNFIELD MEET"

Recorded and edited by LVRHRS member Paul S. Worboys of Honeoye Falls, New York

Author's Note: On February 24, 2004, the writer interviewed 90-year-old Ruth Strong Ostrander at her home in Greenville, South Carolina. Mrs. Ostrander, a native of Auburn, New York, has resided in Greenville for over twenty years. Her husband, Eugene (an Olean, New York, native, who passed away in the mid-1990's) and Ruth raised their family in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. They relocated to South Carolina upon his retirement from Kopp Glass Company. The session is entitled, The "Cornfield Meet." - an old railroad term for a head on collision of two trains.

Gene and I and our three children were going up to Olean for a few days and I decided that it would be well for me to go and see my parents, who lived in Auburn, New York. I hadn't seen them in some time.

It would be about 1949, when my youngest child, Bill, was still a baby. We lived in Pittsburgh and we drove to Olean to see Gene's parents and then I was going to take the Baltimore & Ohio train from Olean up to Rochester and then transfer to a New York Central train for Auburn.

The trip was uneventful and I spent a good time with my parents. Gene called to say *...on the way back, Mother Ostrander thought it would be a nice idea to have a picnic at Letchworth Park [about 60 miles south of Rochester], it will be close to where you would be coming. Instead of coming on to Salamanca [her intended destination], get off at a place called 'Silver Lake Junction.'*

I said, I don't recall ever seeing that stop on the way up. And he said, *Oh, yes, it's in big capital letters here on the train schedule, so get off at Silver Lake Junction.* [That junction is where a branch line - the former Silver Lake Railroad, headed off to the community of Perry, about seven miles away.]

So, being the obedient wife, I did as I was told. I came into Rochester [via the New York Central's Auburn Branch], took a taxi to the B&O station and bought a ticket for Silver Lake Junction. When I got on the train, the conductor said, *Lady, you don't want to get off at Silver Lake Junction, there's nothing there. We'll take you on to Gainesville, the next town five miles down the line. Well, I have to get off at Silver Lake Junction, was my response, because my husband wouldn't know where to find me. He said he would be there.* And the conductor curtly said, *It's just a cornfield!* I replied, *Well, he'll find me... I don't know what else to do?* He shrugged his shoulders and grumbled, *Alright, if you insist.*

So we came to Silver Lake Junction, and he was right - it was a cornfield! Nothing. No buildings in sight, just a cornfield and tracks.

I had on high heels and a floppy hat and began to wonder what I should do. I knew there wasn't another [passenger] train that day. The only thing to do was just follow the track until I came to some place. About that time, I heard a "chug, chug, chug, chug," but knew it couldn't be another passenger train, so, along came a freight train.

I stood beside the track and the engineer pulled up. *He leaned out of the locomotive cab and said, Lady, what are you doing here?* I said, *I was supposed to meet my husband, but this doesn't look like a place to meet.* He exclaimed, *Well, they never should have left you off the train!* I replied, *It wasn't the conductor's fault. I insisted, because I didn't know what else to do. My husband said he'd meet me here.* He said, *Well, this place burned forty years ago - there hasn't been anything here since. The only thing we can do is take you on to Gainesville.* So I asked, *Is there any place I can leave a note, because I know my husband will find me.*

Fortunately, there was a box of some kind alongside the track [possibly a railroad telephone box], so I left a note saying I had gone on to Gainesville.

Well, in the meantime, Gene and the children and Mom and Dad Ostrander got a late start (which was kind of normal for the Ostrandens - not like the Strongs, who were always two hours ahead of time). They got to Silver Springs (a mile south of our intended meeting spot) and Gene asked how to get to Silver Lake Junction. And 'they' said, *Well, there's nothing there!* Gene declared that he was supposed to meet his wife at the depot. And 'they' said, *But there's nothing there, that depot burned forty years ago, there hasn't been anything there since!*

My god, Gene replied, I told my wife where I'd meet her and, knowing her, she'll be there! I can't take the chance that she isn't there. How do I get I get to the Junction? So 'they' said, *Well, you*

THE "CORNFIELD MEET" (CONTINUED)

go a mile north of here and you come to a farmhouse... then you go down through the farm lane... you'll have to go over a couple of fences... you'll come to a cornfield, and that is where the depot used to be.

They followed the directions precisely, left Mother O. and the children waiting in the car alongside the road, and headed off to find me. Dad Ostrander, bless his dear heart, he was in his 60's or 70's, went right along with Gene, climbing over fences and all - it took him four days to recover! And they came down to this spot and Gene saw the note and thought, *Ah, well, everything's fine, she's at Gainesville.* So, it was back over the fences, up the farm lane and to the car.

In the meantime (I have to backtrack to when the freight train came along), the engineer said, *We can't leave you here. We'll go on to Gainesville,* but added, *I don't want to put you up in the engine cab, because you'll get all dirty. When the caboose comes along, just climb on the caboose and they will take you on in.* He directed his fireman to get off and wait there with me. So, along came the caboose, and the fireman said, *Now just grab onto the bar and pull yourself up. The train won't stop completely, so grab the bar.* But I grabbed the wrong bar, the fireman pushed me up and these three men who were in the caboose yelled, *Lady, don't ever get on a train that way!* And I huffed, *Well, my experience is pretty limited. That's the first time I ever had to do that!*

As it turned out they were wonderful and the first thing they said to me was, *We are all family men here.* (I thought that declaration was interesting. But it didn't have the significance it had many, many years later, when, in retelling the story for the tenth time, it suddenly struck me that they were reassuring me they were gentlemen.) They helped me - there were bunks in there and a little refrigerator. They got me a glass of water and helped to sit me up on one of the bunks and, in due time, we arrived at Gainesville.

I waited there at the tired little depot and, in an hour or two, along came the Ostranders. Well, I was feeling a little 'cool' towards my husband [chuckle], but he was perfectly relaxed, since he knew I had gone on to Gainesville with no problem. He was very grateful to the men in the caboose and, since I had gotten their names and addresses, he sent a nice note to each one of them, together with a carton of cigarettes. "Knights of the Road," he called them - their names were something like Kiley, Frost and Calley.

At any rate, it became a family story and we had a good many laughs and reminiscences. Some day, I ought to go back and have my picture taken.

Officers and Trustees of the Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society

President	Kenneth May	12/31/05
Vice President	Joseph Commisso	12/31/04
Secretary	Rita Gurewitch	12/31/04
Treasurer	Deborah Halderman	12/31/04
Trustees:	Randy Darrow	12/31/06
	David Halderman	12/31/06
	William Young	12/31/04
	Joseph Dickson	12/31/04
	Jack Tuttle	12/31/05
	David Fleenor	12/31/05

These dates indicate the expiration date of the present trustee and officer terms.
Nominees and a ballot will be mailed to all active members in November.