

The Black Diamond

Official Newsletter of the Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society

APRIL 2005

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

The April 2005 edition of "The Black Diamond" features full details about all upcoming Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society events during the spring and summer. Our group will be sponsoring dinner train excursions on May 22, and the Finger Lakes Railway Tenth Anniversary open house and train excursions on July 30. This issue includes current Society news as well as reports about the 2004 Fall Foliage, 2004 Santa, and 2005 Easter Bunny train excursions. There are two feature articles about the demolition of the LVRR station in Buffalo and the Finger Lakes Railway's future excursion train plans. 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

2004 LEHIGH VALLEY RAILROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL REPORT

2004 was a very good year for the Society. Membership numbers remained about the same, our finances were stable, and our excursion program prospered. A list of our major achievements over the past year follows:

- 1) In terms of membership, there was a total of 153 paid members for 2004, compared with a total of 160 paid members for 2003.
- 2) During 2004, we were able to meet all monthly owner financing payments and operating expenses.
- 3) Our passenger train excursion program continued to grow and prosper. The LVRRHS sponsored five excursion events in cooperation with the Finger Lakes Scenic Railway during 2004 – Easter Bunny, Railfan Day, Dinner Train Ride (with Buffalo Bill's and Depot Restaurants), Fall Foliage, and Santa Claus.
- 4) We held six public open houses at our station museum on the first Saturday afternoon of each month between May and October. Attendance ranged from 12 to 24 visitors per open house.
- 5) We redesigned and revamped the Society web site in June with assistance from Technical Services of New York. We have utilized the web site to advertise our excursions and recruit new members.
- 6) We reprinted the Society membership brochure in the spring and have distributed thousands at Society events, regional train shows, hobby shops, and other museums in Central and Western New York State during the year.
- 7) We became more involved in the community by joining the Shortsville/Manchester Area Chamber of Commerce. We attended their November meeting and gave a presentation about the LVRRHS and our activities.
- 8) We staffed a display promoting the Society at the Ithaca train show in April. Members have brought our membership brochures and excursion flyers to other train shows throughout the year.
- 9) We advocated preservation of the LVRR roundhouse in Manchester by contacting public officials by telephone and in writing and urging them to save the historic building.
- 10) We received many generous donations of time, labor, and materials from Society members and the community for maintenance of our station museum.
- 11) Our members and the public donated additional railroad memorabilia and artifacts to our museum.

12) Our officers, trustees, and members made many individual contributions of their time and talents that helped the Society to succeed in 2004.

These achievements of 2004 are a result of the hard work and dedication of our membership. 2005 will bring more challenges and opportunities for our Society. I look forward to working with all of you in the year ahead. Thank you for your support of the LVRRHS.

Ken May, President
January 16, 2005

SOCIETY ELECTION RESULTS

Joe Dickson, Nominating Committee chairperson, reported the Society election results at the LVRRHS annual meeting on January 16, 2005. The results were as follows: Vice President – Roger Halderman, Secretary – Rita Gurewitch, Treasurer – Deb Halderman, Trustee – Joe Dickson, and Trustee - Emma Halderman. Congratulations to the new officers and trustees and thanks to the retiring officers and trustees for their service!

LVRR MANCHESTER ROUNDHOUSE CLEAN-UP PROJECT

The Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society made a request that the Village of Manchester cut down and remove the trees and brush on the Lehigh Valley Railroad roundhouse property on Merrick Circle owned by the County of Ontario at the Village Board meeting on February 7, 2005. The Manchester Village Board approved our request and the clean-up project will start in April.

The project will include clean-up of the property on the north and east sides of the roundhouse building facing Merrick Circle and clean-up of the property on the south side of the roundhouse building (turntable site). Work on the project will be done by village workers and volunteers and will continue through the year as time and manpower allow.

Three volunteers worked on the roundhouse clean-up project on Friday, April 15, 2005, and made great progress. Brad Smith from Smith's Mill Sawmilling in Victor brought his Bobcat and was able to remove trees and brush 2/3 of the way along the Merrick Circle side of the roundhouse. Brad also graded off the ground where he dug up the trees and brush. Ken May and Bill Young from the Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society picked up all the trash along Merrick Circle and deposited it curbside for removal by the Manchester DPW. Bill and Ken also cut down weeds and the leftover brush on the site. Thanks to all who participated in the clean-up.

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 7, June 4, July 9, August 6, September 10, and October 1. 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. We will be inviting rail historians to give presentations at some of the open houses. Watch the local newspapers for details in the coming months. Admission is free; donations are welcome. All members are invited to stop in for a visit.

DINNER AND TRAIN RIDE EVENT MAY 22

The LVRRHS, in cooperation with the Finger Lakes Scenic Railway, will sponsor a special train excursion from Shortsville to Clifton Springs and back on Sunday, May 22, 2005. Passengers will have a choice of dinner at either Buffalo Bill's or the Depot Restaurants after the one hour, 10 mile train ride. The price for the train ride and dinner will be \$25.00 per person. For more information and to make dinner reservations, please call either Buffalo Bill's Restaurant at 585-289-4104 or the Depot Restaurant at 585-289-3600.

FINGER LAKES RAILWAY TENTH ANNIVERSARY OPEN HOUSE AND TRAIN EXCURSIONS

The Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society, in cooperation with the Finger Lakes Scenic Railway, will sponsor train excursions over the former New York Central "Auburn Road" railroad line between Geneva, New York, and Cayuga, New York, on Saturday, July 30, 2005, to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Finger Lakes Railway. Three passenger train excursions will be operated from Geneva to Cayuga and return using two Finger Lakes Railway diesel locomotives painted in the New York Central "lightning stripe" paint scheme and two newly refurbished Finger Lakes Scenic Railway passenger coaches. A public open house will be held all day long at the Finger Lakes Railway Offices and Shops in Geneva during the excursions.

Each train ride will last two hours and will be a 26 mile round trip. Departure times are 10:00 a.m., 12:30 p.m., and 3:00 p.m. All trains will load and unload at the Finger Lakes Railway Offices and Shops on Border City Rd. in Geneva. Free parking is available at this location.

Fare for the train excursion is \$18.00 per person. Ticket mail order forms can be obtained by visiting the Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society web site on the Internet at www.lvrhrs.org or sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Finger Lakes Railway Tenth Anniversary Train Excursions, Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society, P. O. Box RR, Manchester, NY 14504-0200. If the rides are not sold out in advance, tickets will be available at the FGLK Offices and Shops at the time of the scheduled trip.

Snacks, beverages, and gift items will be sold on board the trains. No smoking or alcohol is allowed. There are restrooms in each of the two passenger coaches. The coaches are air conditioned for passenger comfort. For more information about the train excursions, please call 585-289-8022.

FALL FOLIAGE TRAIN EXCURSIONS REPORT

The Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society, in cooperation with the Finger Lakes Scenic Railway, sponsored fall foliage train excursions over the former New York Central "Auburn Road" railroad line between Shortsville and Geneva on Saturday, October 9, and Sunday, October 10, 2004. Six passenger train excursions were operated over the weekend from Shortsville to Geneva and return over the Finger Lakes Railway using two diesel locomotives and two passenger coaches. Each train ride lasted two hours and was a 34 mile round trip.

A total of 826 passengers rode the trains over two days – 398 on Saturday and 428 on Sunday. Five out of the six round trips were sold out. The average passenger count per train was 138.

Paid ads were placed in the Daily Messenger, the Democrat and Chronicle, the Finger Lakes Times, 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 banner ad was placed on the Railroad.net web site. R News in Rochester publicized our event on their "Getaway Guy" segment on the air and on their web site.

Thanks to Deb Halderman for handling all of the telephone inquiries along with retail and mail order sales. A total of 739 tickets were sold in advance. Tickets were sold by Buffalo Bill's Restaurant in Shortsville, 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. Thanks to Joe Commisso for helping to watch the exhibits. Sales at the gift shop staffed by Deb and Emma Halderman were very good. The food concession operated by the Shortsville Fire Dept. did a

brisk business before and after each of the six trips. Thanks to George Whittaker for cleaning the station before the excursions.

As always, we received outstanding service and cooperation from the Finger Lakes Scenic Railway train crew comprised of Kevin Buckland, Trainmaster; Ken Maines, Engineer (Sat.); Bruce Habberfield, Engineer (Sun.); Bonnie Buckland, Snack Bar; Kathy Fisk, Gift Shop (Sat.); Judy Habberfield, Gift Shop (Sun.); 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 Dave and Roger Halderman for volunteering as boarding assistants. Thanks to Bill Young and Dave Fleenor for volunteering as car hosts. I appreciate the Society's support of this fund-raising project.

Ken May, Excursion Coordinator

SANTA TRAIN EXCURSIONS REPORT

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 26, and Saturday, November 27, 2004. 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 a 12 mile round trip.

A total of 1122 passengers rode the trains over two days – 543 on Friday and 579 on Saturday. Five out of the ten round trips were sold out. The average passenger count per train was 112.

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. Kathy Meredith from the Daily Messenger wrote a feature news story about our excursions that appeared in the November 25 edition of the newspaper. R News in Rochester aired a news story by Mike O'Brian ("The Getaway Guy") all day on Thursday, November 25, about our excursions.

Thanks to Deb Halderman for handling all of the telephone inquiries along with retail and mail order sales. A total of 578 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 concession operated by the Shortsville Fire Dept. did a brisk business before and after each of the ten trips. Thanks to Jim Kerins for displaying his G scale model train set and bringing the sound system. Thanks to Dan Hodge for displaying his N scale model train modules.

As always, we received outstanding service and cooperation from the Finger Lakes Scenic Railway train crew comprised of Kevin Buckland, Trainmaster; Dan Smith, Engineer (Fri.); Ken Maines, Engineer (Sat.); Bruce Habberfield, Conductor; Bonnie Buckland, Snack Bar; Judy Habberfield, Gift Shop; and Adam Buckland; Helper. Thanks to Joe Frasca for being Santa Claus. Thanks to Sean Miller and Kristin Ward for doing the balloons on the train.

Thank you to all of the Society members who assisted with the excursions in one way or another.

Thanks to Joe Dickson, Bev Halderman, David Halderman, and Jack Tuttle for volunteering as parking lot attendants. Thanks to David and Roger Halderman for volunteering as boarding assistants. Thanks to Dave Fleenor, Paul Shinal, and Bill Young for volunteering as car hosts. I appreciate the Society's support of this fund-raising project.

Ken May, Excursion Coordinator

EASTER BUNNY TRAIN EXCURSIONS REPORT

The Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society, in cooperation with the Finger Lakes Scenic Railway, sponsored Easter Bunny train excursions over the former New York Central "Auburn Road" railroad line between Shortsville and Clifton Springs on Saturday, March 26, 2005. Five passenger train excursions were operated from Shortsville to east of Clifton Springs and return over the Finger Lakes Railway using two diesel locomotives and two passenger coaches. Each train ride lasted one hour and was a 10 mile round trip.

A total of 649 paid passengers rode the trains. Three out of the five round trips were sold out. The average paid passenger count per train was 130.

Paid ads were placed in the Daily Messenger, the Democrat and Chronicle, the Finger Lakes Times, 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. R News in Rochester aired a news story by the "Getaway Guy" all day on Saturday, March 26.

Thanks to Deb Halderman for handling all of the telephone inquiries along with retail and mail order sales. A total of 440 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 concession operated by the Shortsville Fire Dept. did a brisk business before and after each of the five trips. Thanks to George Whittaker for cleaning the station and thanks to Jim Kerins for bringing his sound system.

As always, we received outstanding service and cooperation from the Finger Lakes Scenic Railway train crew comprised of Kevin Buckland, Trainmaster; Dan Smith, Engineer; Bruce Habberfield, Conductor; Bonnie Buckland, Snack Bar; Judy Habberfield, Gift Shop; and Adam Buckland; Easter Bunny. Also, thanks to Sean Miller and Kristin Ward for making the balloon animals for the kids on the train again.

Thank you to all of the Society members who assisted with the excursions in one way or another. Thanks to Joe Dickson, Bev Halderman, and Jack Tuttle for volunteering as parking lot attendants. Thanks to Dave and Roger Halderman for volunteering as boarding assistants. Thanks to Bill Young and Dave Fleenor for volunteering as car hosts. I appreciate the Society's support of this fund-raising project and look forward to the Finger Lakes Railway Tenth Anniversary trains in July 2005.

Ken May, Excursion Coordinator

BLACK FLAGS

Long-time LVRRHS member Karl Hixson of Manchester passed away on April 9, 2005. Karl was a dedicated volunteer and supporter of the Society. He will be greatly missed at our meetings and fundraising events. Our condolences to Karl's family.

UPCOMING LVRRHS EVENTS

April 17, 2005 – LVRRHS Meeting, 6:30 p.m.

May 7, 2005 – LVRRHS Station Museum Open House, 1-3 p.m.

May 22, 2005 – Dinner and Train Ride, 3:00 p.m.

May 22, 2005 – LVRRHS Meeting, 6:30 p.m.

June 4, 2005 – LVRRHS Station Museum Open House, 1-3 p.m. (Shelden King, guest speaker)

July 9, 2005 – LVRRHS Station Museum Open House, 1-3 p.m.

July 24, 2005 – LVRRHS Meeting, 6:30 p.m.

July 30, 2005 – Finger Lakes Railway Tenth Anniversary Open House and Train Excursions

August 6, 2005 – LVRRHS Station Museum Open House, 1-3 p.m.

August 21, 2005 – 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 STORIES

BUFFALO LEHIGH VALLEY RAILROAD STATION DEMOLISHED

By Marty Biniasz (from December 2004 “Lost Buffalo” column, Biniasz.com)

During December 2004, Buffalo lost one of its last remaining urban train stations. No fanfare, no public lamenting. In fact, most people never knew that the building was once the pride of the Lehigh Valley Railroad. A railroad that hoped the facility would put a modern face on an aging system.

During the mid-1950s, New York embarked on a massive project to build a statewide thruway system. Railroad right-of-ways in to and out of Buffalo were to become the modern transportation’s primary urban corridors. With declining passenger business and a decaying downtown station, the LVRR opted to sell its valuable property and build anew on the city’s suburban border.

Located at Dingens and South Ogden Streets, the station formally opened for service on August 11, 1955. The facility replaced a neo-classical structure that fronted Washington Street. (now the site of the Donovan State Office Building). The station was demolished in 1960. Passengers arriving at or departing from Buffalo on Lehigh Valley passenger trains over the famous Route of the Black Diamond found the new terminal readily accessible. It was easily reached from Buffalo’s residential and suburban sections and was only feet away from the new New York State Thruway. The city’s downtown hotels, business and shopping areas were advertised as being only 10 minutes away by taxi. Completely modern in every detail, the newest Terminal, and the last to be built in Buffalo, combined beauty and utility.

The Ogden Street Station was doomed from day one. Almost immediately after the service began, the Lehigh Valley looked at discontinuing passenger operations. In May 1959, the LVRR discontinued all but two of its main-line passenger trains, and those two, the New York-Lehigh John Wilkes and the New York-Toronto Maple Leaf. Loss suffered by the railway in 1958 was estimated at \$3,570,933 and in 1959 \$1,583,999. The era of Lehigh Valley Railroad passenger service in Buffalo ended on February 3, 1961, when the Maple Leaf completed its run to the Queen City. The run marked the end of 115 years of Lehigh Valley passenger service. J.R. de Capriles, vice president and general counsel of the Lehigh Valley, attributed the decrease in the Lehigh Valley's passenger traffic to increased motor and air travel - and competition from the New York Central and the Erie-Lackawanna Railroads. These railroads also connected New York and Buffalo, and their routes were shorter, requiring one and a half to two hours less than the Lehigh Valley.

During the station's post railroad life, it would house a bank, light industrial businesses and offices. The glass passenger waiting room was torn down in the mid-1960s. Sadly, this forgotten landmark was torn down in 2004.

Finger Lakes Railway plans passenger trips: Gradual expansion would include adding line from Himrod to Lyons

By Craig Fox, Finger Lakes Times Staff Writer, Tuesday, February 1, 2005

GENEVA — Like the little engine that could, Finger Lakes Railway officials have big plans to turn their small-excursion operation into a venture that could serve more than 100,000 passengers a year.

For the past several years, Finger Lakes Railway has rented its two sightseeing cars to service organizations and charitable groups for fund-raisers, including the Rotary Club's popular Santa Train Express.

But now, the Geneva-based freight and excursion company wants to offer the trips on its own, said railway President Mike Smith. It also will soon expand to four sightseeing cars.

So far, the company has invested about \$150,000 in its excursion business and plans to spend more money to expand operations, Smith said.

Acquiring a crucial rail line from Himrod to Lyons from Norfolk Southern is the first step, Smith said.

The company plans to step up negotiations in the coming months to buy the 20 miles of line that would allow for regular runs from the Yates County line to the village of Lyons, where an Amtrak station is planned.

Finger Lakes Railway, the largest railroad in the Finger Lakes, started a freight division 10 years ago and hauls industrial material, fertilizer and salt. The company's trains run through Geneva, south to Watkins Glen, east to Solvay and west to Canandaigua, via Phelps, Manchester and Clifton Springs.

But now is the time to go after the excursion market with a bigger approach, Smith said.

That would mean making use of the transportation center proposed for Geneva, near the \$5 million Hampton Inn and a Lyons National Bank branch under construction at Lake and Exchange streets.

The company could start with excursions to Geneva to Kashong, then expand to Lyons or south to Himrod.

When a company wants to get started in the popular railway excursion business "you dip your toes in water and see how you like it," Smith said. "We want to start off small and build up."

Finger Lakes Railway will soon be making its first run during the dead of winter. Stivers Riverside Inn has booked a Valentine's Day weekend excursion through the company.

If all goes well, Finger Lakes Railway would have regular runs and offer excursions for business groups and special events such as weddings and parties, Smith said, adding that he hopes to add trips to the Carrier Dome in Syracuse some day. Drawing 100,000 passengers a year is a conservative estimate, he said.

Finger Lakes Railway, which started with a work force of eight and now has 32 employees, would add jobs as the company grows, Smith said.

The company has been talking with City Manager Rich Rising about its plans.

The excursions and train station would help the city's growing tourism industry, Rising said.

"I think that excursion trips could become their niche," Rising said.

The new 55-room Hampton Inn and the existing Ramada Inn, in addition to the region's wineries, would work well with the sightseeing trips, and the railway would also bring customers to them, Smith said.

"There's a lot going on in Geneva, and I think we would be a great asset," Smith said.

The two passenger cars not being used have been gutted and extensively renovated — including being painted and the installation of a heavy duty generators, lighting, electrical and heating and air-conditioning systems.

Finger Lakes Railway acquired the four cars about eight years ago from Via Canada, Canada's version of Amtrak. Built in 1954 by the Canadian Car Foundry, the cars needed a lot of renovations. They were initially planned for excursions based in Watkins Glen, but those plans were too expensive and had to be delayed.

Ultimately, the company found a niche with excursion trips for the Rotary Club, the Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society and others.

If the company grows as Smith expects, Finger Lakes Railway may build a larger downtown facility for its headquarters. It's now housed in a modest double-wide trailer off Border City Road.

OFFICERS AND TRUSTEES OF THE LEHIGH VALLEY RAILROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

President:	Kenneth May	12/31/2005
Vice President:	Roger Halderman	12/31/2006
Secretary:	Rita Gurewitch	12/31/2005
Treasurer:	Deborah Halderman	12/31/2007
Trustees:	David Fleenor	12/31/2005
	Jack Tuttle	12/31/2005
	Randy Darrow	12/31/2006
	David Halderman	12/31/2006
	Joseph Dickson	12/31/2007
	Emma Halderman	12/31/2007

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