

The Black Diamond

**Official Newsletter of the Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society
December, 2008**

Message From The Editor

Welcome to the December, 2008 edition of the "Black Diamond". 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 dhalderman@rochester.rr.com Thank you for your contributions.

David Halderman, Editor/President

We wish all our members and their families a joyous
Christmas season, and a Happy New Year!

ONTARIO CENTRAL & FINGER LAKES RR HISTORY

By Ken May

Ontario Central Railroad (1979-2007)

After the demise of the Lehigh Valley Railroad in 1976, Conrail became the designated operator of the rail line between Manchester and Victor. A connection track was built by New York State in Manchester, between the former LV mainline and the former NYC "Auburn Road" branch line in 1978. Conrail was not interested in long-term operation of the line so the Ontario Central Railroad was formed and began operations on October 1, 1979. Ontario County later purchased the tracks from the LV estate.

The Ontario Central Railroad shared management with the Ontario Midland Railroad in Wayne County until 1994. In 1998, the ONCT formed a partnership with the Livonia, Avon, and Lakeville Railroad. The Surface Transportation Board approved the sale of the ONCT to the Finger Lakes Railway in 2007.

The base of operations for the Ontario Central Railroad was the Victor Insulators warehouse off Maple Ave. in the Village of Victor. The ONCT stored their locomotives in the warehouse. Victor Insulators was the railroad's largest customer and received many carloads of materials used in the manufacture of ceramic high voltage insulators. Other major customers for the ONCT were the team track at Route 251 for transload of telephone poles, Ryan Homes in Farmington, and T&K Storage in Manchester.

Finger Lakes Railway (1995-Present)

The Finger Lakes Railway began operation on July 23, 1995. A partnership comprised of Farmrail, Genesee and Wyoming Industries, and Rail Services purchased 118 miles of railroad track previously known as the "Geneva Cluster" from the Consolidated Rail Corp. (Conrail). In October 2007, the Finger Lakes Railway acquired the Ontario Central Railroad and added 14 more miles of railroad track, bringing their total miles of trackage to 132.

The main track from Canandaigua to Solvay was formerly the New York Central Railroad "Auburn Road" branch line which dates back to 1836. Other portions of the Finger Lakes Railway were once the Lehigh Valley Railroad mainline (Geneva to Kendaia and Manchester to Victor) and the Pennsylvania Railroad Elmira branch line (Penn Yan to Watkins Glen). Historic freight and passenger depots, while not used for their original purpose, still stand along the tracks in Canandaigua, Shortsville, Clifton Springs, Waterloo, Seneca Falls, Cayuga, Sennett, Skaneateles Junction, Martisco, Camillus, Penn Yan, and Watkins Glen.

Since 1995, the Finger Lakes Railway has grown rapidly from 6 to 50 employees; from 3 to 12 locomotives; and from an initial car movement of 5,600 to nearly 18,000 carloads per year. The rail freight business serves a diverse customer base handling a wide range of commodities including plastics, canned foods, grain, lumber, paper products, scrap metal, finished steel, and minerals such as salt, sand, soda ash, and fertilizer. Customized service has allowed new customers to locate on line and existing customers to increase their business. The Finger Lakes Railway has connections with three Class I railroads – CSX, Norfolk Southern and

Canadian Pacific – which benefits all of their customers.

Passenger train service along the Finger Lakes Railway began in 2001 with special excursions sponsored by local organizations such as the Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society and the Geneva Rotary Club. Today, excursions include many of the same annual holiday trips, as well as added weekday excursions for groups, private excursion opportunities, commuter runs to special events, and themed train rides like the “Blues and Brews”, wine and cheese, and fall foliage trains. Over 11,000 passengers boarded Finger Lakes Scenic Railway trains for a total of 61 days of excursions in 2007. Passenger trains generally operate from April through December on weekends and certain weekdays over different sections of the Finger Lakes Railway.

NEW YORK CENTRAL RR MEMORIAL TRAIN RIDES REPORT

By Ken May

The Finger Lakes Scenic Railway operated special train excursions on Saturday, May 17, 2008, and Sunday, May 18, 2008, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the last passenger train run by the New York Central Railroad over the "Auburn Road" line on May 18, 1958. Saturday's train traveled from Geneva to Solvay and return. Sunday's train traveled from Geneva to Shortsville and return. Both trains made stops at historic freight and passenger stations in communities along the line. A vintage New York Central Alco RS-3 diesel locomotive #8223 on loan from the Central New York Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society powered the trains. The passenger train featured 1950's era coaches decorated in the New York Central two-tone gray paint scheme.

Saturday's train boarded passengers in Geneva, Seneca Falls, Cayuga, and Auburn. Stops were made at railroad depots in Seneca Falls, Cayuga (Village Clerk's Office and meeting room), and Skaneateles Junction (model railroad layout of Central New York Model Railroad Club and Historical Society). Next, the train stopped at the 1870 Martisco Depot (Central New York Chapter, National Railway Historical Society museum) and then continued on to the end of the line in Solvay

before heading back west. The train returned non-stop to Geneva, except to drop off passengers at their original boarding locations.

Sunday's train boarded passengers in Geneva, Phelps, Clifton Springs, and Shortsville. Stops included a tour of the Clifton Springs Public Library (former passenger depot), and a lunch layover in Shortsville at the Depot 25 Restaurant, where railroad and baseball historical memorabilia line the walls of this former passenger depot. Passengers visited the Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society museum after lunch. The train was unable to continue on to Canandaigua and stop at the former passenger depot because of a broken rail east of Shortsville. A shuttle bus transported passengers between Clifton Springs and Shortsville. The train returned non-stop to Geneva, except to drop off passengers at their original boarding locations.

AUBURN ROAD HISTORY

The New York Central "Auburn Road" line is one of the oldest and most historic railroads in New York State. Today's Finger Lakes Railway line between Canandaigua, Geneva, Auburn, and Solvay started existence in the 19th Century as the Auburn and Syracuse Railroad and the Auburn and Rochester Railroad. They were chartered in 1834 and 1836 respectively. The two original railroads were conceived as links in the chain of eight railroads that eventually joined Albany and Buffalo.

In 1850, a new company named the Rochester and Syracuse Railroad merged the Auburn and Rochester and the Auburn and Syracuse Railroads and work began on a new main line called the Direct between Syracuse and Rochester. The eight individual railroads between Albany and Buffalo were consolidated into the New York Central Railroad in 1853. The "Auburn Road" was then relegated to branch line status, although it continued as an important feeder to the main line for more than a century. Timetables showed that at its peak in the early 20th Century, seven passenger trains in each direction operated over the line daily. Many sections were double tracked, thus allowing for easy passing of trains. Scores of freight trains served a multitude of local industries along the line.

Regular passenger service on the "Auburn Road" was discontinued on May 18, 1958. The line between Victor and Pittsford was abandoned by the New York Central Railroad in 1960. The New York Central Railroad merged with the Pennsylvania Railroad on February 1, 1968, to form the Penn Central Railroad, which declared bankruptcy on June 21, 1970. The Penn Central Railroad was folded into the Consolidated Rail Corporation (Conrail) on April 1, 1976. Subsequently the "Auburn Road" was abandoned between Canandaigua and Victor by Conrail in 1979. The section between Pittsford and Rochester was abandoned by Conrail in 1982. On July 23, 1995, Conrail sold the line between Canandaigua and Solway to the Finger Lakes Railway.

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 Lehigh Valley Railroad mainline between Shortsville, New York, and Victor, New York, on Saturday, October 11, 2008, and Sunday, October 12, 2008. Five passenger train excursions were operated over the weekend from Shortsville to Victor and return over the Finger Lakes Railway using two diesel locomotives and five passenger coaches. Each train ride lasted two hours and was a 24 mile round trip. A total of 1,248 passengers rode the trains over two days – 744 on Saturday and 504 on Sunday. This was a new ridership record for our fall foliage excursions. All five round trips were sold out. Paid passenger counts for each trip were as follows: Sat. 10:00 a.m. - 247, Sat. 12:30 p.m. - 248, Sat. 3:00 p.m. - 249, Sun. 12:30 p.m. - 255, and Sun. 3:00 p.m. - 249. The average passenger count per train was 250.

Paid ads were placed in the Daily Messenger, 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. An article about our excursions was published in the "Empire State Limited" column in the October 2008 issue of Railpace

Newsmagazine. The Finger Lakes Visitors Connection posted our news release on their web site.

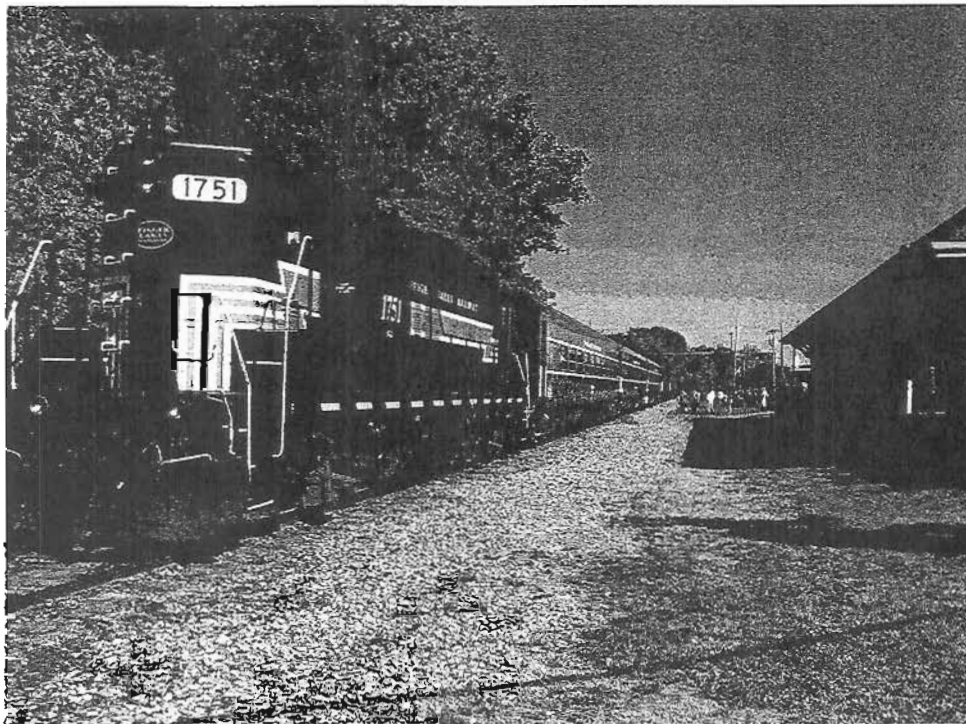
A big thank you to Deb Halderman for handling all of the telephone inquiries along with retail and mail order sales. A total of 871 tickets were sold in advance. Tickets were sold by Bright Ideas at the Five Seasons Gifts in Canandaigua, Country Corner in Phelps, Depot 25 Restaurant in Shortsville, Ivy Thimble Quilt and Gift Shop in Victor, and Manchester Village Hall 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 were very good. The food concession operated by the Shortsville Presbyterian Church did a brisk business before and after each of the five trips. Thanks to P&J Lawn Care for mowing the lawn before the excursions. Special thanks to Joe Dickson, Deb Halderman, and Jack Tuttle for cleaning the station and repairing the deck on the Friday before the excursions.

As always, we received good service and cooperation from the Finger Lakes Scenic Railway train crew comprised of Don Brown (Sat.); Bernie Beikirch (Sat. & Sun.); and Bruce Habberfield (Sun.). Thanks to Deb Najarro, Judy Salone, and the FGLK on-board crew (Adam Stoneham, Adriel Douglas, Nicki Race, and William Storrs) for their services.

Thank you to all of the Society members who assisted with the excursions in one way or another. Thanks to Deb Halderman and Deb Gulvin-Chase for volunteering at the ticket sales table. Thanks to Bev Halderman for volunteering in the gift shop. Thanks to Joe Dickson, Gary Lembke, Ross Liddiard, and Jack Tuttle for volunteering as parking lot attendants. Thanks to Dave Fleenor, Dave Halderman, and Lynn Heintz for volunteering as guest conductors. Thanks to Roger Halderman for helping out at the station. Thanks to Sean Angelo for helping out on board the trains. I appreciate the Society's support of this fund-raising project and look forward to the Santa trains on November 29, 2008.

Ken May, Excursion Coordinator



FGLK engine #1751, along with 5 passenger cars and another engine, idles next to the LVRHS museum bldg., during the LVRHS' 2008 Fall Foliage Excursions.

Society Meetings and Open Houses

Society meetings are held on the third Sunday of each month, at 3:00 PM, at the LVRHS Station Museum, located at 8 E. High St., Shortsville, NY. Our open houses are being held on those same days, from 1:00 to 3:00PM. Open houses are normally held during the summer only, except for special requests.

All members are encouraged to attend our monthly meetings.

2009 Membership

As always, membership renewal and new memberships are welcome. 2009 is going to be a busy year for the Society, with a very large deck project coming up, possible new gutters, and some display work, along with our usual train trips.

So please remember to renew your membership, and remind anyone who may be interested, to join the Society and pitch in for a worthwhile and FUN cause.

Also, please remember to cast your votes in the upcoming election and return your ballot as soon as possible. Thanks!

SANTA TRAIN EXCURSIONS REPORT (REVISED 12/1/08)

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 Saturday, November 29, 2008. Five passenger train excursions were operated from Shortsville to Canandaigua and return over the Finger Lakes Railway using two diesel locomotives and three passenger coaches. Each train ride lasted one hour and was a 12 mile round trip.

A total of 738 paid passengers rode the trains. All five round trips were considered sold out. Paid passenger counts for each trip were as follows: Sat. 10:00 a.m. - 160, Sat. 11:30 a.m. - 143, Sat. 1:00 p.m. - 150, Sat. 2:30 p.m. - 135, and Sat. 4:00 p.m. - 150. The average paid passenger count per train was 148.

Paid ads were placed in the Daily Messenger and the Genesee Valley Pennysaver. Press releases were published in the Courier-Gazette, the Daily Messenger, the Democrat and Chronicle, and on various Internet web sites. The Finger Lakes Visitors Connection also publicized the event on their calendar.

A big thank you to Deb Halderman for handling all of the telephone inquiries along with retail and mail order sales. A total of 514 tickets were sold in advance. Tickets were sold by Bright Ideas at the Five Seasons Gifts in Canandaigua, Country Corner in Phelps, Depot 25 Restaurant in Shortsville, Ivy Thimble Quilt and Gift Shop in Victor, and Manchester Village Hall 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 were good. The food concession operated by the Shortsville Presbyterian Church did a brisk business before and after each of the five trips. Special thanks to Joe Dickson, Bev Halderman, Deb Halderman, and Jack Tuttle for cleaning and decorating the station before the excursions. Thanks to Jim Kerins for bringing his sound system and supplying his Finger Lakes Railway DVDs for sale. Thanks to Dan Hodge for displaying his N scale model train modules. Thanks to the Red Jacket Madrigal Choir for entertaining the passengers on the 10:00 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. trips.

As always, we received good service and cooperation from the Finger Lakes Scenic Railway train crew comprised of Bernie Beikirch, Conductor/Engineer, and Irwin Kistler, Conductor/Engineer. Thanks to Deb Najarro, Judy Salone, and Adriel Douglas for their services on board the trains.

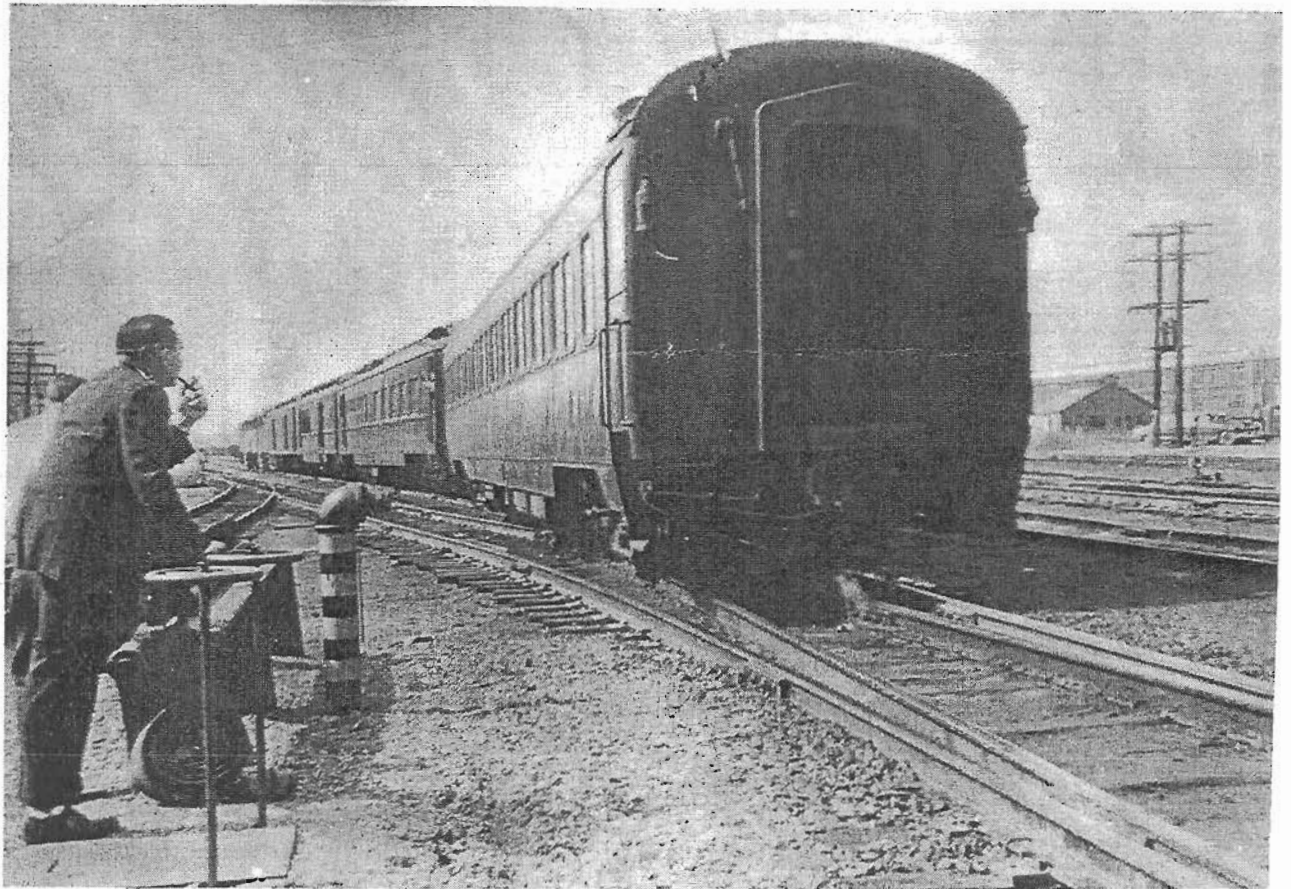
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helping out on board the trains. Thank you as well to Joe Frasca, who once again did an outstanding job as Santa Claus. I appreciate the Society's support of this fund-raising project and look forward to future excursions.

Ken May, Excursion Coordinator

Other Thank-you's

Thank you to P & J Lawn Kare for providing lawn mowing and snowplowing services to the museum in 2008. Your support is greatly appreciated! Thank you also, to George Whittaker for providing the paper supplies for the restrooms.



Last westbound "Black Diamond" leaving Sayre, Pa., May 11, 1959, Ernest Lehr, at left, watching.

(photo provided by Dave Fleenor)

Officers and Trustees of the Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society

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Please visit the Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society website at:
www.lvrrhs.org for information, updates and future excursion plans.