

The Black Diamond

Official Newsletter of the Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society

October 2016

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

The October 2016 edition of "The Black Diamond" features full details about all Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society events during the year. **After a four year hiatus, the LVRRHS will be sponsoring Santa train excursions over the Finger Lakes Railway from our station museum in Shortsville on November 26th.** Please send any Society news and/or historical articles about the Lehigh Valley Railroad 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/Trustee

SANTA TRAIN EXCURSIONS TO RUN OVER FINGER LAKES RAILWAY BETWEEN SHORTSVILLE AND PHELPS ON SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 2016

The Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society, in cooperation with the Finger Lakes Railway, will sponsor Santa train excursions over the former New York Central Railroad "Auburn Road" branch line between Shortsville and Phelps on Saturday, November 26, 2016. Five passenger train excursions will be operated from Shortsville to Phelps and return over the Finger Lakes Railway using two diesel locomotives and three passenger coaches. Santa Claus 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. The station museum will be decorated for the holidays and will have operating model train displays. Operation Lifesaver will have a railroad safety display.

Each train ride will last one hour and will be an 18-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 LVRRHS station museum. Passengers are requested to arrive at the boarding location at least 20 minutes before departure time to pick up their tickets. 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 \$18.00 per person for adults and children age 3 and over. Children age 2 and under on lap are free. The ticket price includes the train ride and admission to the museum. Tickets can be purchased by visiting the Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society web site on the Internet at www.lvrrhs.org and clicking on the Excursions link or by calling 585-289-9149 and leaving a message for a return call. *Seat Yourself credit card charges will appear as Theatre-Tix.com in New York on statements.* If the rides are not sold out in advance, walk-up tickets will be available at the LVRRHS station museum at the time of the scheduled trip.

Snacks and beverages will be sold onboard the trains. We are also looking for a group to sponsor a refreshment stand to be operated outside the station. The museum gift shop will be open. No smoking or alcohol is allowed. There are restrooms at the station and in the passenger coaches. Passengers are advised to dress appropriately for the weather.

The Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society was organized in 1994 to preserve the memory of the Lehigh Valley Railroad and its employees in New York State. In October 2001, the LVRRHS purchased the ex-New York Central Railroad freight station in Shortsville for use as a museum and meeting place. The proceeds from the train excursions will benefit the society's museum operations.

2016 STATION MUSEUM OPEN HOUSES

The Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society Station Museum in Shortsville, New York, was open to the public one Sunday afternoon a month from May to October this year. Open house dates were May 15, June 19, July 17, August 21, September 18, and October 16. Attendance at all of the open houses was good. Thanks to the LVR RHS members who volunteered at the station museum open houses.

RAIL HISTORIAN GIVES PRESENTATION ABOUT “AUBURN ROAD” RAILROAD LINE AT SEPTEMBER OPEN HOUSE

Mr. Paul Shinal of Seneca Falls presented a historical overview of the “Auburn Road” at the September 18 LVR RHS station museum open house before an audience of 25 people. The railroad line still runs today from Canandaigua to Solvay near Syracuse through Shortsville, Clifton Springs, Phelps, Geneva, Waterloo, Seneca Falls, Cayuga, Auburn, and Camillus. 2016 marked the 175th Anniversary of the line, which Paul highlighted with maps, schedules, and photographs, some depicting the early years of its existence. The line is recognized in railroad history as one of the oldest railroads still operating in America. Paul’s presentation spanned from its beginning as the combined efforts of the Auburn & Syracuse and Auburn & Rochester Railroads, through the New York Central, Penn Central, and Conrail years to today as the main route of the Finger Lakes Railway.

Paul is a CPA and retired member of the faculty of Cayuga Community College, where he taught for 35 years. In his retirement, his favorite hobby has come to the forefront. When not at home constructing his own northeastern heritage HO scale model train layout, Paul enjoys researching our region’s railroad history. Along with various brochures, he has compiled a comprehensive booklet highlighting historical facts of nearly all railroads once traversing the Finger Lakes. He is a member and financial advisor of the Central New York Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society in Syracuse. His love for trains began when he received a Lionel train set as a young child. Paul’s earliest memory of trains was riding with his mother on the last westbound passenger train from Seneca Falls to Geneva on May 18, 1958.

AUBURN ROAD HISTORY

The Shortsville freight station is located along a portion of one of the oldest and most historic railroads in New York State known as the “Auburn Road”. This section, of what is now the Finger Lakes Railway, started existence in the 19th Century as the Auburn and Rochester Railroad. It was chartered in 1836. Construction work was started in 1840 and was finished in 1841. The Auburn and Rochester Railroad was conceived as a link 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 Solvay to the Finger Lakes Railway.

LEHIGH VALLEY RAILROAD BRANCH LINE ABANDONMENTS IN UPSTATE NEW YORK

Compiled by Ken May

Auburn Branch:

North Fair Haven – Fair Haven, 1937
Fair Haven – Cato, 1953
Cato – Throop, ????
Throop – Auburn, 1961
Auburn – Fleming, 1971
Fleming – Moravia, 1966

Auburn & Ithaca Branch:

Cayuga Jct. – Auburn, 1969
Cayuga – Aurora, 1971
Aurora – Lake Ridge, 1950

Elmira & Cortland Branch:

Elmira – Horseheads, 1975
Horseheads – Van Etten, 1938
Van Etten – Spencer, 1932
Spencer – East Ithaca, 1935
East Ithaca – Freeville, 1977 (embargoed 1973)
Freeville – South Cortland, 1977 (embargoed 1976)
Cortland Jct. – River, 1975
River – Canastota, 1967
Canastota – Camden, 1938

Ithaca Branch:

Ithaca – Trumansburg, 1962
Trumansburg – Geneva Jct., 1967

Naples Branch:

Naples – Rushville, 1970
Rushville – Geneva, 1975 (embargoed 1973)

Rochester Branch:

Hemlock – Lima, 1945

Seneca Falls Branch:

Geneva Jct. – LV Jct., 1969
Cayuga – Cayuga Jct., 1971

Additions and corrections to this list are welcomed.

DONATIONS

Thanks to Dick Coffey for mowing the station museum lawn during 2016.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

If you have not already renewed your membership for 2016, we hope that you will consider renewing for 2017. Memberships received after September 30 will be considered good through 2017. We thank all of our members for their continued support of the Society.

LVERRHS MEETINGS

Society meetings are held on the third Sunday of each month at 3:00 p.m. at the LVERRHS Station Museum, 8 East High Street, Shortsville, New York. All members are encouraged to attend the monthly meetings.

Visit the Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society website at www.lverrhs.org for the latest information about Society activities.

“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.

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Santa Train Excursions – Saturday, Nov. 26th!