

# The Black Diamond

Official Newsletter of the Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society

December 2010

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## MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

The December 2010 edition of "The Black Diamond" features full details about Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society events during the past year as well as contributions from Greg Miller and Arthur LeFevre. 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](mailto:kemay59@hotmail.com). Thank you for your contributions.

Ken May, Editor/Trustee

## 2010 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 16, June 20, July 18, August 15, September 19, and October 10. Attendance at all of the open houses was good. Thanks to the LVRHRS members who volunteered at the station museum open houses.

## 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 Railroad "Auburn Road" line between Shortsville, New York, and Geneva, New York, on Saturday, October 9, 2010, and Sunday, October 10, 2010. Five passenger train excursions were operated over the weekend from Shortsville to Geneva and return over the Finger Lakes Railway using two diesel locomotives and five passenger coaches. Each train ride lasted two hours and was a 30 mile round trip.

A total of 1,029 passengers rode the trains over two days – 521 on Saturday and 508 on Sunday. Two out of the five round trips were sold out. Paid passenger counts for each trip were as follows: Sat. 10:00 a.m. - 136, Sat. 12:30 p.m. - 187, Sat. 3:00 p.m. - 198, Sun. 12:30 p.m. - 253, and Sun. 3:00 p.m. - 255. The average passenger count per train was 206. Thank you to all of the passengers who rode our train excursions. We appreciate your patronage!

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

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 before the excursions.

As always, we received good service and cooperation from the Finger Lakes Scenic Railway train crew. Thanks to Deb Najarro, Judy Salone, and the FGLK on-board crew for their services aboard the trains.

Thank you to all of the Society members who assisted with the excursions in one way or another. Thanks to Deb Halderman for volunteering at the ticket sales table and in the gift shop. Thanks to Bev Halderman for volunteering in the gift shop. Thanks to Tom Monnat, Joe Dickson, Jack Tuttle, Ross Liddiard, and Gary Lembke 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.

## **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 Railroad "Auburn Road" line between Shortsville, New York, and Canandaigua, New York, on Saturday, November 27, 2010. 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 795 passengers rode the trains. All five round trips were sold out. Paid passenger counts for each trip were as follows: Sat. 10:00 a.m. - 156, Sat. 11:30 a.m. - 168, Sat. 1:00 p.m. - 155, Sat. 2:30 p.m. - 157, and Sat. 4:00 p.m. - 159. The average paid passenger count per train was 159. Thank you to all of the passengers who rode our train excursions. We appreciate your patronage!

Paid ads were placed in the Daily Messenger and the Genesee Valley Pennysaver. News 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.

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. Special thanks to Bev Halderman and Deb Halderman for cleaning and decorating the station before the excursions. Thanks to Dan Hodge for displaying his N scale model train modules. Thanks to Jim Kerins for bringing his sound system to play Christmas music. 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. Thanks to Deb Najarro, Judy Salone, and the FGLK on-board crew for their services aboard the trains.

Thank you to all of the Society members who assisted with the excursions in one way or another. Thanks to Deb Halderman for volunteering at the ticket sales table. Thanks to Bev Halderman for volunteering in the gift shop. Thanks to Dick Coffey, Joe Dickson, Ross Liddiard, and Jack Tuttle for volunteering as parking lot attendants. Thanks to Dave Halderman for volunteering as a guest conductor. Thanks to Roger Halderman for helping out at the station. Thank you as well to Walter Crum, Sean Miller, and Kristi Ward, the balloon artists, and to Jim Lockwood, who did an outstanding job as Santa Claus.

## **FGLK TO GIVE UP EXCURSIONS**

Finger Lakes Railway will sponsor its last passenger train excursion on December 19. The company will not resume booking passenger excursions in May, as usual, but is looking for another party to manage and operate the passenger services. (Finger Lakes Times, November 14, 2010)

## **LEHIGH VALLEY RAIL TALES**

### **My Greatest "15 Minutes of Glory" - A True Event of the Lehigh Valley Railroad**

**By G. J. Miller, Retired LVRR Relief Agent/Operator**

Those that follow my journal are familiar with the fact that I was a blue collar railroad employee, and a very honored one at that. Not that I was the focus of the honor, but I was honored to be just a blue collar railroad employee. I started my railroad career on the deck of a steam locomotive, as a fireman for the now famous Morris County Central Railroad and an employee of a wonderful and determined man by the name of Earl Gil. In that fireman's position, I perhaps was one of the most photographed railroaders of all time. I was a fireman when doing my graduate work at the University of New Haven, from 1974 until 1975.

After finishing my graduate work, I returned to the beautiful Finger Lakes region of New York State. The USA was in a severe recession at the time and you couldn't buy a job. I got a break when I was hired by the Lehigh Valley Railroad as a relief agent/operator. I had to work when other agents went on vacation. I had a regular assignment as block operator at the Sayre, Pennsylvania, telegraph office on Thursday nights, reporting at 11:59 PM each week. I hated that job. There was just too much for one man to do, but with the railroad in bankruptcy being short of help was an expected necessity.

As the months moved forward, April 1, 1976, was approaching quickly. On that date, the Lehigh Valley Railroad ceased to exist as a transportation company and its railroad assets were transferred to Conrail. At about 3:00 AM on March 28, 1976, I heard the door to the telegraph office open and in paraded about 40 men of the railroad. Some I knew because they not only got their orders at Sayre Telegraph Office, but many of the men had watched me grow up living about 100 feet from the mainline at Yale, New York. When it was discovered that I was that kid who waved to every crew for 23 years, the men went nuts knowing my life about as good as their own.

Of the 40 or so men in the room, an elderly man stepped forward and said, "Mr. Miller, I am the most senior man on the Lehigh Valley, and I understand you are the most junior man of the company." I said, "I'm pretty sure you're right." He said, "Tonight is my last run, and I have 52 years of service with this company." I said, "How in God's name did you put up with it so long?" He said, "It's just the first 30 years that are the toughest."

Another man stepped forward and said they had been planning this meeting for about a month. The most senior employee would shake hands with the most junior employee and everybody would come to see it happen. The old timer then reached out his hand and I reached forward and we shook hands. Of all those old and tough men in the room, there wasn't a dry eye in the house. This certainly was one of the most memorable moments of my life. The hands reaching and touching connected generations of railroaders and represented the end of a great but always struggling company coming into its final few days.

There was no photograph taken of that historic event, but I have often thought of hiring an artist to re-create that scene. It truly was one of the most historic events of the Lehigh Valley Railroad. I was so honored that the men took the time to arrange such an event, and if any of those men are alive today they certainly will remember that scene. A few weeks before, I was told by an old engineer that even though the end was nearing, there would always be a Lehigh Valley Railroad, no matter what happened. It's true - the spirit of the working man and the devotion of generations of the men and women of the Lehigh Valley Railroad will always inspire the human spirit.

### **Always a Big Event at the Lehigh Valley Railroad Depot in Moravia**

Those that follow my online journal know I had the privilege to be a blue collar railroader. The old-

timers would tell me stories of the Lehigh Valley Railroad in the real old days told to them by their grandfathers and fathers.

One of my favorites is about when oil tycoon John D. Rockefeller would come to Moravia, New York, in his private railroad car to visit his family. You see old John D. was a fringe Finger Laker. He grew up in Richford, New York, which was close to Moravia and was the clerk at the general store. Somehow, he and this Drake fellow who drilled the first oil well in what is now Oil City, Pennsylvania, got hooked up. Drake struck oil and Rockefeller struck pay dirt. When John D. got off the platform of his private car, he always pulled out his pigskin change purse, and gave out brand new dimes to those he met. He would say, "Have a cup of coffee and a cake (donut) on the Standard Oil Company."

Most thought Rockefeller was ruthless and mean. To me, he was just a regular Finger Laker. He used unusual methods. He always thought it wasn't about how much oil you had to sell, but how you controlled the amount available. His success has been studied by thousands of economists, but simply put being a Finger Laker you operate "outside the box."

Think about this - when was the last time the Chairman of the Board of Exxon Mobil handed anyone \$3 to have a cup of coffee and a donut? I think old John D. would be surprised how ruthless and mean the oil business has become today.

### **How The Events Of One Day Changed My Life Forever**

Those that follow my journal know that I had a long career as a blue collar railroader. Many ask how an academic like me ended up being "a working man." Like the movie Forrest Gump, I sometimes wonder how these things happen, but I know the answer to this one.

When attending the University of New Haven for my graduate work in the field of Criminal Justice, I ran across a fellow undergraduate who worked for the now famous Morris County Central Railroad. His name was Frank Larkin and he was an engineer for that tourist railroad. I told him I grew up next to the mainline of the Lehigh Valley Railroad, and because that road always had a new color scheme about every six months, I always watched to see the next new set of colors. Frank asked if I would like to go with him and visit the newly relocated Morris County Central Railroad at Newfoundland, New Jersey. His dad was Chairman of the Board of Fieldcrest Textiles and lived in Montclair, New Jersey, and he went home each weekend to visit his family and to work for the MCC.

So we went down to Newfoundland one weekend in April of 1974. As I said, the MCC had relocated and all the equipment was there but nothing was orderly. Since the MCC mostly had volunteers, help was spotty sometimes. I met Earl Gil, the line's president, that day and he seemed determined but overwhelmed by the job that lay ahead in getting things set up. Frank discovered he had no fireman that day to fire up engine number 4039. Earl asked Frank how old his friend was and Frank asked me and I said I was 22. Gil told me, "You're old enough to be a legal fireman - get up on that engine and Larkin will tell you what to do." I was stunned but Gil had just offered me a job. As I reached out and grabbed the grab bar and went up the steps to the locomotive deck, I had no idea that my life had been changed forever.

I learned fast, and over the course of about three years, I was one of America's few steam locomotive firemen. This was something that opened so many doors for me. As I tell folks about life on the railroad, I mention to them that I am one of the few railroaders left that began a railroad career on a steam locomotive. How unique - I have done many things in my life, expert in the field of Criminal Justice, stockbroker, nurse, small business founder, farmer, but I always am most remembered as a railroad man.

I am most proud that I had the chance to work on the railroad. In James Cagney's movie Yankee Doodle Dandy in that famous last scene where flags are all over the place and he leads the

march of everyday working Americans, right next to him is a railroad engineer in coveralls, hat, neckerchief, and long stemmed oilcan. This scene touched me deeply. I was American as apple pie!

## **WORLD WAR II MEMORIES**

### **Letter from Arthur James LeFevre to Mr. G. W. Baker, Vice President – General Manager, LVRR, dated November 15, 1962 (for remarks for the retirement dinner for Pete Ellis)**

On October 20, 1944, I was supposed to start a week's vacation in the Adirondack Mountains. I had my car packed with rifles and gear when I was called about 3 pm by Mr. Grove, then General Manager of the Lehigh Valley, explaining to me they were much in need of qualified railroad men in the European Theatre of Operations as the rail lines were becoming badly congested and they were unable to move necessary supplies up to the armies as they moved forward. Mr. Grove asked me if I would consider entering military service for the reason I was in First World War and if so, I would be sent to Washington and receive appointment as Major in the Transportation Corps. I told him yes, I would, I was going on a hunting trip and asked him when this was to come about, he advising me it would be possibly a week or so. When I completed my work that day, I went home and after having a light lunch was just getting into my car to pick up two other men from Shortsville that were going with me when the phone rang, Mr. Grove contacting me advising I was to get on No. 4 that evening and go to Bethlehem and upon arriving there I would meet Pete Ellis, Trainmaster from Jersey City and we would have transportation over the Pennsylvania RR to Washington. Again I raised the question whether we would be going down and after receiving our assignment if we would return home to take care of our personal affairs and he advised me we would. However, this did not develop as you will see later on.

Upon arrival at Bethlehem, I met Pete and Mrs. Ellis was with him, whom I had never met before and was introduced at that time. Upon arrival in Washington the next morning, we were taken to the Pentagon building where we were given the usual physical examination which one receives when the Army is in desperate need of personnel. It was one of those usual physical examinations that as long as your heart is beating and the body warm you were accepted. The following day we were sworn in and then taken to the officers clothing stores where we were outfitted with a Class A uniform and a khaki uniform with a couple of suits of underwear, couple pairs of socks, Army knife and handkerchiefs, couple of towels – in fact the bare necessities of travelling light overseas. A tailor fitted us to our uniforms as fast as the uniform was selected and on the day of October 26 we were sworn in as Majors in the Transportation Corps of Army of the United States.

We were allowed the 60 lbs of baggage for overseas flight and in the morning were taken to Bolling Field where I believe there were 20 officers ranging from Major or Lieut. Colonel assembled to be flown to London via Gooseneck Bay, Labrador. On this plane was a very well known person, Wellington Koo and his Aide, who was the Chinese Ambassador to London and who was flying with us on this trip, also four Army nurses. Other men whom Pete will remember that were flying with us were Lieut. Col. Lick, Major Burch, Major Bretentze, Major Burke, Major Kendall, Lieut. Col. Bennett, Lieut. Col. McNamara, Major Lake, and Major Davis. Going into Gooseneck Bay we overshot the field and circling around for return we nearly had a fatality by missing the chimney of the Commandant's quarters by inches. We were grounded for 24 hours on account of weather conditions and finally started our flight across the ocean approximately midnight. After travelling about 500 miles we turned back to Gooseneck Bay on account of a leak in the gas line which was repaired and taking off again after repairs were made. We landed in Prestnick, Scotland, some 20 hours later and changed planes and from there flew to London, where we were supposed to have a plane waiting to fly us to Paris. However, we were grounded in London for two days due to heavy fog over the Channel, after which a plane arrived from Paris and we landed in Paris approximately four days later.

In Paris, we were taken before Major General Ross who gave us an orientation on what was expected of us. Next, we were taken to the Supply Depot where we were issued field equipment consisting of helmet, cartridge belt, 45 automatic, canteen, First Aid kit, winter gloves, trenching tools, and other equipment necessary for field operation. We were then assigned various stations, I being sent to 708 Railway Grand Division in Liege, Belgium, and Pete going to LeHarve, France, arriving at our destinations Nov. 3, 1944 - approximately just one week from the day we left home we were assigned and carrying on duties with the United States Army in Europe.

My Commanding Officer, William S. Carr, who was a Superintendent from the New York, New Haven, and Hartford RR and since retired from that railroad assigned me to work in and around Liege, Belgium, until Dec. 10<sup>th</sup>, when he called me in and told me he was sending me to Antwerp, Belgium, where they had a commitment to move 15,000 tons of freight a day into the Area which was the Battle of the Bulge then being fought, but we were only moving between 5,000 and 6,000 tons. Upon my arrival there and review of the situation I found that I had under my jurisdiction 743<sup>rd</sup> Railway Operating Battalion complete, two companies of the 729<sup>th</sup> Railway Operating Battalion, and one company from the 753<sup>rd</sup> Shop Battalion. After a week in Antwerp, General Carr called upon me and I explained the situation to him that with the amount of work and territory to be covered it was practically necessary that I have another Major to assist me which he readily agreed to and when in a week, who would show up but Pete Ellis, who had been with the 707<sup>th</sup> Railway Grand Division. Between Pete and myself we made it a Lehigh Valley Railroad team, Pete taking the Dock area which could berth 521 ships at one time, had 5 pullout yards from various docks where cars were assembled to be taken to the Classification Yard. I took charge of the Classification Yard which was 10 miles outside of Antwerp, east, our outgoing yard being a hump yard with a capacity of 5,000 cars, automatic control, but with no retarders. Inbound yard was also a hump yard with automatic control on the switches and no retarders, with capacity of 3,000 cars. The operation was a 24 hour operation and between Pete and I after analyzing the situation thoroughly, we found that in the incoming yard the English, Belgium, and U.S. forces were all trying to ship their cars through the same yard by taking certain tracks, which did not seem to work out to the effect they were badly congested and the first thing we accomplished was to separate the English from the yard and placed them in the Schineport Yard which was approximately 10 miles east of our present classification yard and placed the Belgium in Amsterdam Round House yard.

Within one month's time after Pete had arrived we took turns, sometimes Pete working in the Classification Yard and I in the Dock Area, we were forwarding 15,000 tons a day and before the end of the third month had increased the tonnage to 25,000 tons a day for which I might say here, Pete and I both received a citation from the City of Antwerp. To show you the magnitude of the assignment we worked 110 yard engines during 24 hour periods in both the dock and classification yard. Shortly after we were stationed there we ran across a Lieut. McKenna, who was with the 753<sup>rd</sup> Shop Battalion at Amsterdam Round House, who we found out later on was formerly from Sayre Shop, which brought our status up to a 3-man Lehigh Valley control team over the operation at Antwerp. Pete, Lieut. McKenna, and myself continued operations in Antwerp representing the Railway Grand Division and supervising the work until hostilities ceased after which I was sent to Cologne as Liaison Officer with the 6<sup>th</sup> British Control team and Pete was sent into Frankfurt and then as I recall he was assigned to the Allied Control Commission in Berlin.

In February 1946, Pete and I had orders to report at Frankfurt where with approximately 30 other officers we entrained by Pullman to Paris and from there to LeHarve to be returned to the United States where we both received a promotion to Lieut. Colonel and placed on inactive duty, Pete returning to the railroad and I just about ready to return to the railroad when I received orders to report to Camp Dix to return overseas where I was picked up by Lieut. Col. Preisch, former Superintendent of the Lehigh Valley and sent by him to Munich as Supt. Motive Power and Equipment of all southern Bavarian railroads. This about ends our tour of duty between Pete and myself. I might say that while in Antwerp, Pete and I had rooms in a five-story apartment house which was requisitioned solely for officers and during our tour in Antwerp over 6,000 bombs hit

the city, one wrecking the building we were in. We survived several air raids, and paratroopers which were dropped in Antwerp at the time. We were both in the control station in Antwerp when a buzz bomb landed, wrecking part of the building and entire area surrounding it and twice bombs dropped in the rear of our yard offices in the Port of Antwerp when we were on duty.

## **LVERRHS MEMBERSHIP AND ELECTIONS**

As always, membership renewals and new memberships are welcome. 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. Thank you for your support of the LVERRHS!

## **2011 ANNUAL MEETING NOTICE**

The annual meeting of the Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society will be held on Sunday, January 16, 2011, at 2:00 p.m., at the Society's Station Museum in Shortsville, New York. Election results for officers and trustees will be announced, 2010 activities will be reviewed, and 2011 activities will be discussed at the meeting. The monthly meeting will be held after the annual meeting. All Society members are invited to attend as well as the public.

## **DONATIONS**

Thank you to Parker Hannifin in Lyons, NY, for the donation of office and visitors chairs, several filing cabinets, a rolling ladder, shelving units, as well as numerous office supplies, a flat screen computer monitor, and many other items. Thank you to P & J Lawn Kare of Shortsville for providing lawn mowing and snow plowing services at the museum during 2010. We appreciate your generous donations!

## **LVERRHS MEETINGS**

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

Visit the Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society website at [www.lvrhrs.org](http://www.lvrhrs.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.

## **OFFICERS AND TRUSTEES OF THE LEHIGH VALLEY RAILROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

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***The Society wishes all of its members and their families a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!***