

The Black Diamond

Official Newsletter of the Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society November 2024

Message from the Editor

The November 2024 edition of “The Black Diamond” provides full details about all Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society events during the year. Featured in this issue are two newspaper articles about LVRR history submitted by Richard Palmer. Please send any Society news and/or historical articles about the Lehigh Valley Railroad to me by U. S. Mail at P. O. Box 200, Manchester, NY 14504-0200 or by e-mail at kemay59@hotmail.com. Thank you for your contributions.

Ken May, Editor



View of New Roof on East Side of LVRRHS Station Museum (Ken May Photograph)

Station Museum Roof Replacement Project

A new metal roof was installed on the Shortsville freight station museum in July by Rufus Shirk of Penn Yan. New gutters and downspouts were also installed on the building. The entire project cost \$19,810.50 and was paid in full.

Ken May submitted grant applications to the Rochester Area Community Foundation for \$5,000 (awarded in June) and the Amherst Railway Society for \$1,000 (awarded in August). Debby Herendeen raised \$2,065 through a “Raise the Roof” campaign on her Shortsville Manchester Enterprise Facebook Page. The “Quarter Mile Challenge” led by Deb Halderman has raised \$307.17 to date.



Finger Lakes Railway Engine 2005 leads the American Association of Private Railcar Owners Special at the E. High St. crossing in Shortsville on June 15. The train made a station stop for passengers to tour the LVRHRS Station Museum. (Ken May Photograph)



Fall Foliage Train and Passengers at LVRHRS Station Museum (Tina May Photograph)

2024 Fall Foliage Train Excursions Report

The Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society, in cooperation with the Finger Lakes Railway, sponsored fall foliage train excursions over the former New York Central Railroad "Auburn Road" branch line between Shortsville, New York, and Geneva, New York, on Saturday, October 12, 2024. Two passenger train excursions were operated from Shortsville to Geneva and return over the Finger Lakes Railway using two diesel locomotives and three passenger coaches. Each train ride lasted two hours and 45 minutes and was a 30-mile round trip.

A total of 348 passengers rode the trains. Both round trips were sold out. Paid passenger counts for each trip were as follows: 9:30 a.m. - 170, and 1:00 p.m. - 178. The average passenger count per train was 174. Thank you to all of the passengers who rode our train excursions. We appreciate your patronage!

The train excursions were publicized at no cost on our Facebook page, the Finger Lakes Railway Facebook page, and the Facebook pages of Debby Herendeen and Toni Ross. All of the tickets were sold within five days.

The Society freight station museum was open to passengers during the excursions. Sales at the gift shop were very good. Thanks to Deb Halderman, Ken May, and Jack Tuttle for cleaning the station before the excursions. Thanks to Fred Albrecht, Dick Coffey, and Jack Tuttle for getting the parking lot ready.

As always, we received excellent service and cooperation from the Finger Lakes Railway train crew comprised of Bruce Habberfield and two other employees.

Thank you to all of the Society members who assisted with the excursions in one way or another. Thanks to Bev Halderman for managing online ticket sales, returning telephone calls, and staffing the gift shop. Thanks to Deb Halderman for setting up online ticket sales, staffing the ticket pickup table, and ordering tickets and brochures. Thanks to Fred Albrecht, Dick Coffey, Joe Colasacco, Mark Skipworth, and Manchester Model Railroad Association members Mike Buttaccio, Pat Buttaccio, Carl Johnson, Mike Migliaccio, Joel Richter, and Dave Wright for volunteering as parking lot attendants. Thanks to Dave Halderman, Scott Kirkendall, Ken May, and Tom Monnat for volunteering as guest conductors and boarding assistants.

2024 Station Museum Open Houses

The Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society Station Museum was open to the public one Sunday afternoon a month from May to October this year. Open house dates were May 19, June 16, July 21, August 18, September 15, and October 20. Attendance at the open houses was very good. Thanks to the LVRRHS members who volunteered at the open houses.

Lehigh Valley Railroad History Program

The Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society hosted the Lehigh Valley Railroad History Program at our station museum on Saturday, April 20. The free event was a celebration of the history of the Lehigh Valley Railroad with a program of DVDs, slides, movies, photographs, and discussions. David Monte Verde gave presentations about Pittsburgh & Lehigh Junction and the final days of the LVRR. Thanks to everyone who participated in this year's special event.

Finger Lakes Railway History Presentation

Duncan Richards of Rochester gave a one-hour long presentation about the history of the Finger Lakes Railway at the station museum open house on Sunday, October 20. The PowerPoint presentation was authored by Kevin Buckland of Rochester, a retired trainmaster for the railroad. It featured Kevin's photographs of Finger Lakes Railway freight and passenger train operations between 1995 and 2017.

2025 LVRRHS Annual Meeting Notice

The annual meeting of the Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society will be held on Sunday, January 19, 2025, at 2:00 p.m., at the Society's Station Museum at 8 East High Street in Shortsville, New York. Election results for officers and trustees will be announced, 2024 activities will be reviewed, and 2025 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.

Collections Committee Report

Jack Tuttle, Deb Halderman, and Betty McMahon have been meeting on Wednesdays at the station museum to accession the Richard Pearson collection. Over 2600 items have been accessioned so far. Mark Skipworth and Ken May have assisted with sorting and scanning slides.

LVRRHS Facebook Page

The Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society Facebook page has much more content added over the past year. Mark Skipworth has posted numerous historic photographs and postcards of LVRR locomotives, trains, structures, and facilities in Upstate New York from the Richard Pearson collection in the photos section. Note that you do not have to sign up for Facebook to view the page.

Membership Renewals

If you have not already renewed your membership for 2024, we hope that you will renew now. Memberships received after September 30 will be considered good through 2025. We thank all of our members for their continued support of the Society.

Donations Needed

Please consider making a donation to the Society when renewing your membership. Funds are needed for museum operations and to help defray the cost of the new roof on the station museum. Thank you for your generosity.

Membership Drive

We are actively seeking new members for the Society. Please ask anyone that you know with an interest in railroads to join our group. They can print and fill out the membership application from the Join section of our website. Thank you for your support.

LVRHHS Website

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

LVRHHS Information

“The Black Diamond” is published by the Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society, P. O. Box 200, Manchester, NY 14504-0200. Displays and archives are located at 8 East High Street in Shortsville, New York. Contact the museum at 585-289-9149 and leave a message for a return call.

Officers and Trustees of the Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society

President:	David Halderman
Vice President:	Kenneth May
Treasurer:	Deborah Halderman
Secretary:	Deborah Halderman
Trustees:	Joseph Dickson
	Rita Gurewitch
	Beverly Halderman
	Betty McMahan
	Jack Tuttle



Standard Reporter Rides Night Freight to Sayre and Return

Dons Overalls With "Thack" Winnie and Learns the Sway of 131-Ton, K-4 Model, Pacific Type Freight Locomotive

Cortland Standard, November 13, 1937

By L. B. Van Dyck

Two deep throated blasts on the whistle and Lehigh Valley Extra No. 2053, night freight for Sayre, began its long pull out of Cortland with a string of 40 cars destined to 40 different points.

There is something about a departing train that stirs the interest of the average individual - where it is going and where its freight or passengers may be bound. There are many in Cortland who have listened as the night freight puffs up the five mile grade to Gracie each evening between 9 and 10, the deep toned whistle resounding through the valleys as it blows for every crossing.

Of course, railroad regulations are pretty strict against allowing the public to ride anywhere but in a passenger coach but on this evening, we have permission to ride along with Engineer Thaxter J. Winnie and Fireman Harry Coates, so let's get into some old clothes.

Although the 131-ton Pacific type locomotive, a K-4 model, is not due to leave the roundhouse until 9:05, Engineer Winnie usually arrives shortly after 8, spending his time oiling the engine, signing the register and seeing that the roundhouse hostlers have put everything in readiness. While he is busy at this, Fireman Coates arrives and checks up on the fire which has kept up about 150 pounds of steam in the boiler through the day.

As the hour for departure approaches, the fireman turns a couple of valves, the one starting the worm gear stoker pushing coal from the tender into the firebox and the other opening a jet of steam which blows the coal out over the fire. It is only a matter of minutes before the steam gauge shows 210 pounds pressure and to hold it there is the fireman's job.

The engineer is back in his cab now and at 9:05, with three short blasts on the whistle, signals that he is ready to back out. Easing the throttle open he starts the heavy locomotive down through the yards but the motion is so easy that one has to look out the window to be sure whether the engine is going backward or forward.

Now we slide by the passenger station and cross Main Street, down on to the long siding where a yard crew has the train made up and waiting. Here Conductor Ara Woodworth and trainman Nicholas Mahar and Leon Keyes board the locomotive.

"Forty cars, cut four at Freeville" the conductor announces, handing the engineer his running orders, giving him the right of way to Owego, and a clearance card permitting the train to move. Flagman Clarence Genung remains alone in the caboose but the others will join him after switching at Freeville.

Two pulls on the whistle cord and the train is off at 9:25 p.m. It is a tough pull up grade from a standing start but the big engine has snaked 66 cars away from the same place finds no difficulty in hauling 40 as Engineer Winnie, with 31 years of experience behind him, opens the throttle a notch at a time, feeding sand to the drivers as they need it by means of an air valve at his right hand.

Another small air valve is twisted and the bell starts ringing - no more pulling on the bell rope for the fireman for this is a compressed air operation.

Now the whistle blasts out its warning for the first crossing, now Owego Street, Delaware Avenue, and Tompkins Street with its blinker signals winking as the engine rolls across.

The strong rays of the headlight strike on the white whistle post at the right of the track and the engineer blows for the crossing of the Gracie Road. Steadily the train gains speed, but the engineer is on the alert, shooting sand on the rails the instant the exhaust stack begins quick pants to indicate that the wheels are slipping. Exhaust steam from the cylinders puffs from the stack, forming a strong draft for the fire and billowing out overhead, silhouetted by the headlight.

Now there is a deafening roar overhead as the first safety valve pops. If one were a musician he might identify that hum as that of lower G in the bass clef, accompanying the roar of the steam. Three safety valves, releasing at intervals of two pounds, safeguard the engine, but the fireman has cut down his fire already and the second valve does not pop.

The train has reached the top of the grade and as the engineer eases up on the throttle and the fireman cuts his draft, the train begins to descend toward Freeville. Through McLean with nearby buildings catching the deep throated blast of the whistle and tossing it back in shriller tones, on through Malloryville, we roll and now as the lights of Freeville loom there is a hissing roar as the engineer deftly eases on the air brakes.

We stop and the trainmen drop off, four cars are cut out and placed on a siding, the locomotive takes water for the long run to Sayre and switches are thrown to allow us to move out on the main track from Auburn.

It is a long hard climb again through Dryden and North Harford, but beyond that point we wind down through the river valley, rumbling over bridges and blowing for crossings

that cut the right of way. It is late evening and most houses are dark. Village street lights flash by as the whistle roars out warning and motor vehicles halt with their lights illuminating the locomotive as it rumbles by. There is more sway to the locomotive than a passenger feels in a coach but one soon grows accustomed to that.

Now a state highway parallels the tracks and the train slides by a truck lit up like a Christmas tree. The air brakes hiss and sigh again and the train slows down, for we are nearing Owego. In the glow of the headlight we see Agent Neil C. Hopkins, formerly of East Homer, standing in front of the station, holding a hoop for the fireman to catch with train orders. The orders are detached and the hoop is dropped to the ground. We read them. We have the right of way to Sayre.

Beside our tracks now is the Erie main line while at our right is the highway. We rumble on, past a night club along the highway. Many cars are parked outside but the music is lost in the noises of the locomotive.

"That's the ..." the fireman starts to tell the name of the club but a blast of the whistle cuts off his words. Now Barton station is left behind and soon the train is pulling into the maze of tracks of the Sayre yard with both engineer and fireman hanging out the windows watching for green switch-lights to allow them to pass.

It is 11:35 when the train stops. How the engineer knew where he was going through that yard is hard for a layman to tell. Now he gets a signal to back his train into the upper yard. If there had been more than 45 cars, a heavy yard engine would have relieved us, but with a shorter train the engineer is able to see to push his load back.

Now the cars are uncoupled and with the train crew remaining in the caboose the locomotive runs light to a siding near the roundhouse yard while yard crews break up the train for its various destinations. We leave the locomotive here, for hostlers will take it over, wash it with a mixture of water and oil, dump the ashes, coal, and water it and run it into the roundhouse for lubrication.

Shifts are changing in the roundhouse and repair shops and engines and cars are moving through the yards, for there is no night under the huge floodlights.

For those who do not carry their lunch, there are restaurants close to the station and rooms are provided adjoining the roundhouse for train crews waiting for their runs, some reading or writing, others getting their work clothes for their lockers, and some washing up at the end of a run.

It is 3 a.m., and Roundhouse Foreman Charles Gillis reports that the train for Cortland will be made up in 10 minutes. Our locomotive is out of the roundhouse and we swing aboard. As we wait one of the Symbol freights pulls in from New York. No doubt this fast freight will take some of the cars that came from Cortland and whisk them westward. Power for these high speed trains comes from a T-1 locomotive, a machine that dwarfs even the locomotive we are riding and would make one of the 1100's, operating in this section, look like a grasshopper.

But now a string of cars is moving by slowly and Conductor Woodworth comes over with the train orders.

"Thirty-one cars and no cuts," he reports, handing the papers to the fireman who reads them and turns them over to the engineer. The locomotive is backed down to where the train is waiting. It has been more than 10 minutes and the engineer's watch says 3:40 as the train starts with a clear right of way over the 60 miles to Cortland.

It has turned cold during the night and a white coating of frost is on the ties and on the hundreds of locomotives standing dead in the yards awaiting overhauling in the shops.

There is a frost on the rails too, and despite the light load, Engineer Winnie keeps his right hand on the lever which feeds sand to the front four of the six drivers. With the throttle only half way open, the locomotive pulls its load up the long climb from Sayre to North Harford. Occasionally even a shot of sand will not hold the drivers and as the locomotive pants the throttle is closed, just for a second, allowing the wheels to grip the rails again.

But what has the fireman been doing all this time? His sole job is to keep up a constant pressure of 210 pounds of steam. Soft? Well, not so hard as shoveling coal constantly on a long upgrade, for now he hardly touches the scoop, but there is plenty for him to do. With the two main valves regulating the flow of coal and the draft he keeps his eye on the worm gears to see that it is drawing fuel from the tender. An electric light is placed down beside the gear. Should the flow be cut off, he can move some coal down from the back of the tender.

Another series of valves regulate the draft in the different corners of the firebox and provides a jet of steam up the stack to be used for draft when the train is standing. Occasionally the fire door is opened but a fireman soon learns how hot a blaze he needs by the way the locomotive is pulling. Now the pressure drops to 198 and he turns on a little more draft and pokes the corners of the fire up a bit. As water in the gauge begins to drop, he opens the injector, which starts a siphon in operation from the tank in the rear of the tender to the boiler.

It still is hours before morning but lights are appearing in an occasional home and porch light is snapped on at one home as the train passes while another someone comes to the window to wave to the crew.

It has taken a lot of steam to make the run from Sayre and Fireman Coates goes back over the coal to check the water in the tender's tank. Not enough left to risk the run to Cortland so the train pulls up opposite the Freeville water tank to fill up.

It has just been an hour and 40 minutes since the train left Sayre and as day is breaking, we start the last few miles of the trip. Now we are coasting down the long grade from Gracie with drifting valves on the cylinders jetting steam. It is just 6 a.m., as we halt in the Cortland yard. The locomotive is uncoupled and pulls away, backing up to the roundhouse where the hostlers will make it ready for its next trip. A yard crew will take it down to the Y at Cortland Junction to turn it, for the turntable is too short for the big engine.

Now we go into the roundhouse to make out reports on the trip, and then off to breakfast and bed - just another night's work for the crew, but a real thrill for a layman.



It's a Long Climb to Reach the Seat of an Engineer, But Just a Step Down to Retire

Thaxter J. Winnie, Lehigh Valley Employee Since 1905, Closes Throttle and Puts on the Brake - Retires Saturday

Cortland Standard, January 31, 1941

When Thaxter J. Winnie steps down from the cab of his locomotive tomorrow morning upon his return from taking the night freight to Sayre, Pa., he will retire voluntarily from service as an engineer for the Lehigh Valley Railroad. Having reached the age of 65 he is not waiting for compulsory retirement at the age of 70 because, "I want to be able to enjoy myself while I'm still able to have some fun."

"It will be just 35 years and four months since I made my first trip," Mr. Winnie said in looking back over his career. "It was the first day of October in 1905 that I started. I only fired four years before I was promoted to be engineer."

Only once since that time was he set back to firing and then only for two weeks when business dropped off and there were not enough jobs for all the engineers. There was quite a number who out-rated him then.

But how long has he been running on the night freight to Sayre? It seems years to residents of the neighborhood that they've heard him blow two short blasts on his whistle each evening after his engine had crossed Delaware Avenue. And if they've been close enough, they've seen his wife answer after she blinked the porch light at their home, 4 Broadway.

But how long has it been? He took the run prior to 1938, that is sure, became during the flood of July that year he and the crew were tied up for up for three days and three nights at Harford Mills.

They were coming home cautiously in the early morning because it had been raining since the afternoon before. Suddenly when they were about a mile north of the village, they saw debris on the tracks ahead. A slide had blocked their progress. With two of the trainmen walking the tracks in the rear of the caboos they backed cautiously down to the

village. There the trainmen flagged them. They could hear the roar of water. A short distance beyond, the creek had washed out the bridge which they had crossed a few minutes before.

There was nothing to do but wait. They found a place to get their meals and slept in the caboose, taking turns in charge of the train. They kept the engine alive by backing it up to the station and letting the water from the roof run into their tank. The last day there they dumped the fire.

Prior to having the night run, Engineer Winnie worked the second trick in the Cortland yard which kept him busy evenings. After all these years of night work he is planning now to catch up in lodge activities at the Masonic Temple. It will seem unusual to a man who has been home only on Saturday evenings to be free every night and not to do his sleeping in a darkened room during daylight hours.

When he started railroading in 1905, he fired extra out of Sayre, running to Cortland and back. During that time, he lived in Waverly, He quit that job in the fall after three years and for the next winter fired on this division running out of Elmira on passenger service and took whatever run was open. For the past 13 years, he has been representative of the engineers on this division as local chairman of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers.

Things are happening thick and fast for him now. Last Friday, February 1, marks his retirement from service and on February 8 is his 45th wedding anniversary.

It was on that date in 1896 that he and Mrs. Winnie, then Miss Grace Haight, were married at 16 1/2 Clinton Avenue by Rev. Frederick Harvey, then Methodist pastor at East Homer and Truxton. For a few years after their marriage, he worked on a farm. Then he went into the milk business for the old Standard Butter Company of Owego and later ran a creamery for three years at North Lansing. After leaving that village, they moved to Cleveland, Ohio, but remained only six months, coming back to Cortland where he was employed by Wickwire Brothers, Inc., plant until he began railroading.

Asked for highlights of his career on the railroad, Mr. Winnie replied that he had been in no serious mishap. "I had an engine tip over with me once at Cuyler and was on the underside but it didn't go clear down and no one was hurt." He has been stuck in the snow for 36 hours at a stretch just west of Canastota. He was engineer on the lead locomotive one time when their snowplow jumped the track and ran into the station at South Bay, tipping over the stove and setting fire to the building.

Then there was the flood in 1935 and another flood in March, 1936, when they were tied up in Sayre until the crew member had to pool their funds to pay expenses, but all told he looks upon his career as rather uneventful.

Mrs. Winnie, however, recalls many nights when it has been stormy and she has worried about his safety.

But what about the future? "My home and garden are my hobbies," he said, adding that he and Mrs. Winnie expect to travel a little to visit friends.

(Mr. Winnie died on April 14, 1956, at his home in Cortland at the age of 80. Mr. Winnie worked 35 years for the Lehigh Valley Railroad. In 1905, he started as an extra fireman out of Sayre, Pa. In four years, he became an engineer, worked in the yard at Cortland as substitute on various runs and for many years was on the run between this city and Sayre. He retired in 1941 at the age of 65.)