



# **The Black Diamond**

**Official Newsletter of the Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society  
November, 2009**

## ***Message From The Editor***

Welcome to the November, 2009 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](mailto:dhalderman@rochester.rr.com) Thank you for your contributions.

David Halderman, Editor/President

## ***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 and Victor on Saturday, October 10, 2009, and Sunday, October 11, 2009. 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 1,023 passengers rode the trains over two days – 592 on Saturday and 431 on Sunday. One round trip was considered sold out. Paid passenger counts for each trip were as follows: Sat. 10:00 a.m. - 160, Sat. 12:30 p.m. - 195, Sat. 3:00 p.m. - 237, Sun. 12:30 p.m. - 221, and Sun. 3:00 p.m. - 210. The average passenger count per train was 205.

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. The Finger Lakes Visitors Connection posted our news

release on their web site.

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, Ross Liddiard, 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 comprised of Chris Smith (Sat.); Bernie Beikirch (Sat. & Sun.); and Don Brown (Sun.). Thanks to Deb Najarro, Judy Salone, and the FGLK on-board crew (Bianca Allen, Josie DeLyser, Ben Murnan, and Kay Oliver) for their services.

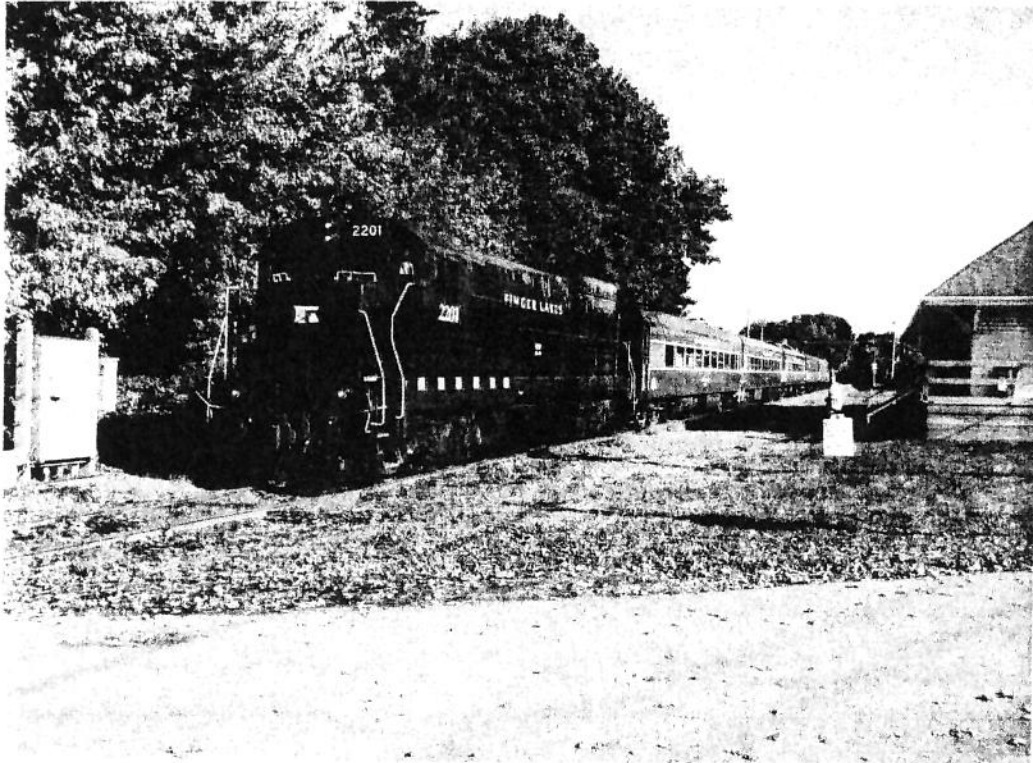
Thank you to all of the Society members who assisted with the excursions in one way or another. Thanks to Deb Halderman for volunteering at the ticket sales table and in the gift shop. Thanks to Bev Halderman for volunteering in the gift shop. Thanks to Dick Coffey, Joe Dickson, Gary Lembke, Ross Liddiard,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

Ken May, Excursion Coordinator

### ***NEW DECK ON THE MUSEUM BUILDING***

We have a new deck on the museum! Late this summer, Bounds Construction, of Clifton Springs, NY, was hired to remove the old deck and construct a new deck for us. The deck was completed in time for our Fall Foliage Excursions, and includes a new wheelchair ramp, a set of steps on the "track side", and all new railings. Bounds also redid the threshold leading inside the doorway, which had old water damage, and also installed new gutters around the entire building.

Thanks to Tim Bounds and his crew for doing a great job!



FGLK #2201 Idles alongside the LVRHS museum just before the start of the 2009 Fall Foliage trips. (Note the new deck on the right)

## **A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE LEHIGH VALLEY RAILROAD IN UPSTATE NEW YORK**

Original article written by Sherry Williams of Newark

Edited and revised by Paul Shinal of Seneca Falls

Additional material by Ken May of Vestal

Originally chartered in 1846 to be a transporter of anthracite coal from the vast coal fields of Pennsylvania, the Lehigh Valley Railroad grew into a major carrier of both freight and passengers between Jersey City, New Jersey, and Buffalo, New York. Its first connection to the Finger Lakes region was in 1871. That year, the Southern Central Railroad, financed by the Lehigh Valley Railroad, completed a line primarily for hauling coal from Athens, Pennsylvania, to North Fair Haven on Lake Ontario via Owego and Auburn. In 1876, the Lehigh Valley Railroad took control

of the newly reorganized Geneva, Ithaca, and Sayre Railroad, started by Ezra Cornell of Ithaca. The famous university that he founded in 1865 would fill regular and special passenger trains with college students and their families for decades.

The line to Geneva provided the Lehigh Valley Railroad a means to construct their own line into Buffalo, but its grade out of Ithaca to Geneva was too steep for heavy freight trains to travel. A diverging route was planned from Van Etten to Geneva along the east side of Seneca Lake. In 1892, the new bypass was open and the line was also completed from Geneva to Buffalo. The original route from Van Etten to Geneva via Ithaca was now used for passenger trains and local freight trains.

A large freight yard and locomotive servicing facilities were constructed by the Lehigh Valley Railroad in Manchester along their new route between Geneva and Buffalo. Opened on September 1, 1892, the Manchester freight transfer yard was built to transfer and expedite less than carload shipments. Records indicated that it loaded and unloaded more than one hundred freight cars a day. Once recognized as the largest yard in the world, it employed over 1,000 people during its peak of operations. After years of declining freight traffic, the Manchester Yard was closed in 1970. Still standing today are the remains of a 30-bay roundhouse and turntable built in 1916.

During the late 1800's and the early 1900's, the Lehigh Valley Railroad built and acquired numerous branch lines in upstate New York. These included a line north from Ithaca following the east side of Cayuga Lake to Auburn via Cayuga and a bypass around Buffalo for traffic to and from Canada via Niagara Falls. Lines also arose from Geneva to Cayuga, joining the New York Central Railroad "Auburn Road" branch line just east of Seneca Falls to cross Cayuga Lake; from Geneva to Naples; from Rochester to Hemlock Lake; and from Elmira to Oneida Lake via East Ithaca, Cortland, and Canastota.

The Lehigh Valley Railroad was well-known for its passenger service. With its double track mainline to Buffalo traversing our area, the cities of Ithaca and Geneva had busy passenger stations, both of which still exist today along roadbeds long since abandoned. Trains such as the Maple Leaf (with connections to Toronto) and the Star traveled through the area, but the premier passenger train was the Black

Diamond Express.

Before its inaugural run on May 18, 1896, the Lehigh Valley Railroad held a contest to name what would be its new luxury train. From over 35,000 entries, the name selected was submitted by Charles Montgomery, a hotel clerk in Toledo, Ohio. The winning entry, the Black Diamond Express, was considered most befitting the premier train of a railroad conceived to haul coal. Running from New York City to Buffalo, the Black Diamond was promoted as a train of luxury. The 315-foot long train was the fastest in their fleet. The Black Diamond had chefs on board who were skilled in culinary arts. Complete kitchens had every facility present for “preparing and serving substantials and delicacies in most appetizing fashion.” Day coaches were outfitted with plush velvet chairs, a large comfortable smoking room, and lavatories for both men and women. The last car seated 28 passengers and included a parlor and an observation platform. It was equipped with plate glass windows at the rear and wicker chairs for passenger pleasure. Initially touted by the Lehigh Valley Railroad as “The Handsomest Train in the World,” the roadbed it traveled soon became known as “The Route of the Black Diamond.” The Black Diamond was nicknamed the “Honeymoon Express” because of its appeal to newlyweds on their way to Niagara Falls.

On August 25, 1911, the second worst passenger train wreck in the history of the Lehigh Valley occurred in Manchester. Train Number 4 eastbound out of Buffalo derailed on the Canandaigua Outlet bridge due to a broken rail. One passenger car overturned on its side while two other passenger cars behind it fell off the bridge into the creek bed 40 feet below. A total of 29 were killed and 62 were injured in the wreck.

As with most railroads, trains and tracks began to rapidly disappear on the Lehigh Valley Railroad after World War II. Passenger service ended between Ithaca and Auburn in 1948. The Black Diamond and the Star made their final runs on May 11, 1959. Early in the morning of February 4, 1961, a blinding snowstorm welcomed the final Lehigh Valley Railroad passenger train into Geneva, the Maple Leaf. Given its lateness and the storm, the passing of an era went almost unnoticed.

The Lehigh Valley Railroad came under the control of the Pennsylvania Railroad in

1962 as a result of years of red ink. With passenger service gone, the track from Ithaca to Geneva was removed in 1963. The double track mainline was single tracked during the mid-1960's because of declining freight traffic. By the time the Lehigh Valley Railroad went bankrupt in 1970, the operating portions of the railroad in the Finger Lakes region were its mainline to Buffalo via Geneva, a branch from Van Etten to Ithaca and north along Cayuga Lake to a power plant near Lansing, and a branch from Rochester Junction near Honeoye Falls to Rochester. Either gone or abandoned were all the tracks that led to places like Auburn, Canastota, Cortland, Naples, and North Fair Haven.

On April 1, 1976, the Consolidated Rail Corporation (Conrail) took over operation of the Lehigh Valley Railroad. Most of the Lehigh Valley Railroad mainline in upstate New York was removed by the late 1970's. Today, only segments between Sayre, Pennsylvania, and Van Etten; Kendaia (former Seneca Army Depot) and Geneva; Manchester and Victor; and Batavia remain in service.

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### ***Society Meetings and Open Houses***

Society meetings are held on the third Sunday of each month, at 3:00 PM, at the LVRRHS 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.

### ***2010 Membership***

As always, membership renewal and new memberships are welcome. 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**

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 28, 2009. 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 726 paid passengers rode the trains. Four out of five round trips were considered sold out. Paid passenger counts for each trip were as follows: Sat. 10:00 a.m. - 147, Sat. 11:30 a.m. - 161, Sat. 1:00 p.m. - 150, Sat. 2:30 p.m. - 152, and Sat. 4:00 p.m. - 116. The average paid passenger count per train was 145.

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.

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 Joe Dickson, Bev Halderman, Deb Halderman, and Jack Tuttle for cleaning and decorating the station before the excursions. 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, Irwin Kistler, and Mark Pullen. Thanks to Deb Najarro, Judy Salone, Adriel Douglas, and Kay Oliver for their services on board 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 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. Thanks to Sean Angelo for helping out on board the trains. Thank you as well to Sean Miller and Kristi Ward, the balloon artists, and to Jim Lockwood, who did an outstanding job as Santa Claus. I appreciate the Society's support of this fund-raising project.

**Ken May, Excursion Coordinator**

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

Thank you to P & J Lawn Kare of Shortsville for providing lawn mowing and snowplowing services at the museum during 2009. We appreciate your support!

***Officers & Trustees of the Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society:***

President:	David Halderman
Vice-President:	Roger Halderman
Secretary:	Rita Gurewitch
Treasurer:	Deborah Halderman
Trustees:	Jack Tuttle
	Ross Liddiard
	Joseph Dickson
	Debbie Gulvin-Chase
	Kenneth May
	Richard Coffey

Please visit the Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society website at [www.lvrrhs.org](http://www.lvrrhs.org) for information, and future excursion plans.