

The Black Diamond

Official Newsletter of the Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society

September, 2006

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

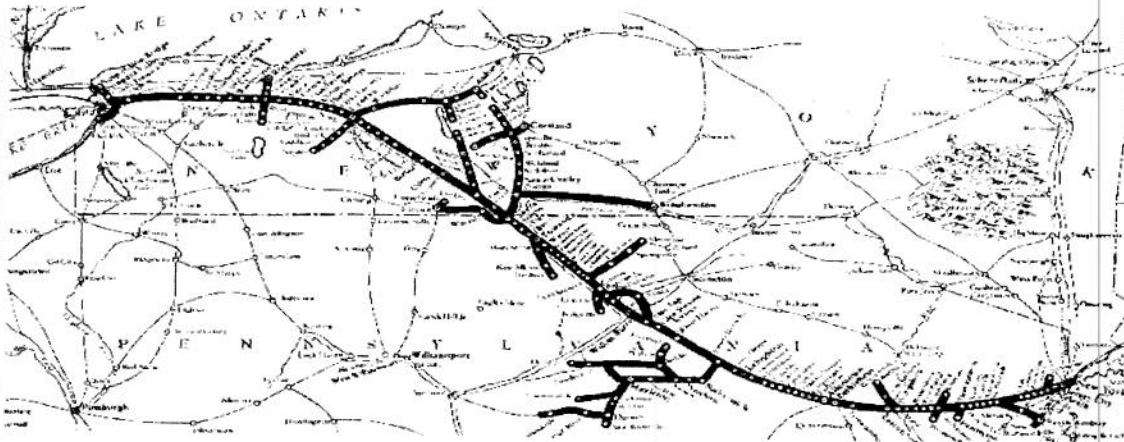
Welcome to the September, 2006 edition of the "Black Diamond". This is a "special" issue, as we are including a nice article from the Gleason Works retirees newsletter "Shifting Gears". Please send any Society news and/or historical articles about Finger Lakes area railroads to me by U. S. Mail at P. O. Box RR, Manchester, NY 14504 or by e-mail at dhalderman@rochester.rr.com. Thank you for your contributions.

David Halderman, Editor/Trustee

History of the Lehigh Valley Railroad (L.V.R.R.) its Museum and Historical Society –

presented by

Roger "Gus" Halderman, a Gleason retiree, and his wife Emma.



The Route of the "Black Diamond"

Gus started at the Gleason Works in 1944 and retired in 1981 after 36 years of service. He and his wife Emma have been married for 56 years and currently live in Manchester, New York.

Once retired, Gus took up model railroading as a hobby. "This was a natural vocation," says Gus, "as my father had

worked for the Lehigh Valley Railroad for 46 years." Gus continues to explain, "My father was an engineer, starting there in 1912 when the round house was built in Manchester." The engine he operated is shown on page 3.

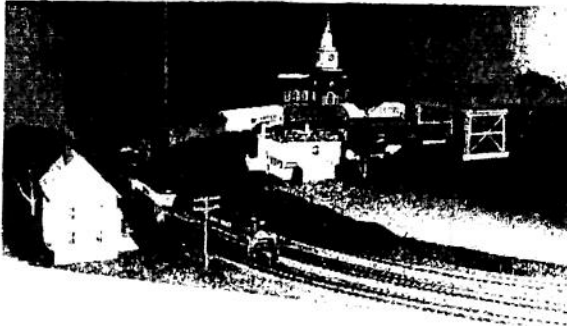
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Manchester roundhouse



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Gus has a wonderful railroad layout in his basement, which includes many trains, buildings and many feet of trackage as shown below and to the right.



Gus currently serves as vice president, and Emma as a trustee, of the Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society. Their daughter, Deborah, serves as treasurer and son, David, serves as a trustee. The society's purpose is to promote and encourage original historical research, particularly the Lehigh Valley Railroad and railroads of the same era and its environs.

The Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society's museum is located in a N.Y. Central Freight Depot (shown below) in Shortsville, New York, a neighboring town.



This is the engine that Gus's father operated

The museum was purchased in 1994 and has a gift shop and meeting room. The meeting room has many donated artifacts and pictures (refer to picture of Gus's dad's frock to the right).



Current membership is about 150, but they are always looking for new members. They meet once a month, hold open houses, and sponsor events during the year. They also have a web site - www.lvrhs.org/ and a newsletter, "The Black Diamond." Gus and his family invite you to visit the web site to see the current events coming up and to join them for some fun.

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The early years of the Lehigh Valley cannot be understood without some knowledge of the anthracite coal boom in the mountains of eastern Pennsylvania in the decades between the War of 1812 and the Civil War. For most of recorded history, humankind had treated wood as the primary source of heat, with all the limitations this entailed. Coal and peat were known, but difficulties in getting the substances to burn in the primitive stoves and ovens of the day and the costs of moving the burnable rock to market limited its use. Many did not even know of its properties. This was to change in the eighteenth century, as industrialization and the discovery of the potential of steam power in Britain moved the world into a new age.

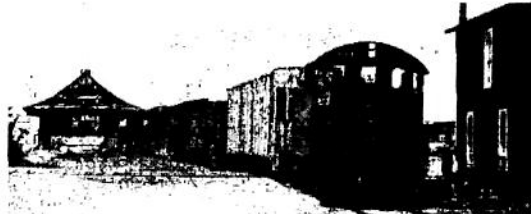
America was still at the dawn of the steam age when the first shipments of hard coal made their way to Philadelphia, Baltimore and New York in the first years of the 1800's. The hardest and purest type of coal, truly black diamond in their hardness and sheen, the anthracite was at first an expensive curiosity that seemed to defy the efforts of its purchasers to light.

The Lehigh Valley Railroad began in the coal fields of Mauch Chunk (later Jim Thorpe), Pennsylvania. Anthracite coal lay close to the surface and could be mined by hand with pick and shovels. The nearby Lehigh River offered transportation down stream to the markets of New York City and Philadelphia. Development of a good regional network of coal companies, canals and railroads led to the Lehigh Valley Railroad. The desire to reach the western markets of the Great Lakes led to a mainline stretching 200 miles across upstate New York and other branches serving central NY and the Southern Tier.

Since the rental agreement with the Erie RR for use of its trackage to Buffalo would expire in 1892, the LV pushed to complete its own line by that date to avoid renewal of the contract. By late 1891 grading of the Geneva-Buffalo and Van Etenville-Geneva rights of way was nearly completed. At Manchester, N.Y., 15 miles west of Geneva, a freight yard was install for transferring and expediting the "less-than-carload" (LCL) shipments. Augmented by a roundhouse and shop facility, the Manchester freight transfer yard eventually handled the loading and unloading of more than one hundred freight cars daily.

Beyond Manchester the new mainline struck west for Buffalo, completely bypassing Rochester, New York State's third largest city. Rochester's prominence as a thriving manufacturing center assured the LV of a substantial business if it were to build a feeder line into the city. Eager for another rail connection, Rochester enticed the LV by offering to build necessary railroad bridges over its waterways. After securing a 20-acre

tract within the city limits, the LV supervised construction in 1891 of its new extension, the Rochester & Honeoye Valley Railroad. Leaving the mainline at Rochester Junction, the branch ran north 12.9 miles to its downtown terminus, an eccentric passenger depot perched precariously on bridgework directly over the waters of the Genesee River.



Henrietta, N.Y. Depot and Matthews & Fields

The LV later extended its branch trackage south from Rochester Jct. until it touched the north shore of Hemlock Lake.

Manchester served as a division point and car classification yard from the day the New York State mainline opened, September 1, 1892. As a division point, crews and locomotives were exchanged. A car classification yard builds trains. Freight cars were switched from track to track organizing them for delivery to their destinations. Support services included the 30 stall roundhouse, the coaling station, facilities for ash removal, track maintenance, car repair, a control tower, the yard office, an ice house, and the bunkhouse-restaurant. In 1913, a freight transfer facility was built for the "less-than-carload" (LCL) lots.



Icing Station at Manchester, New York

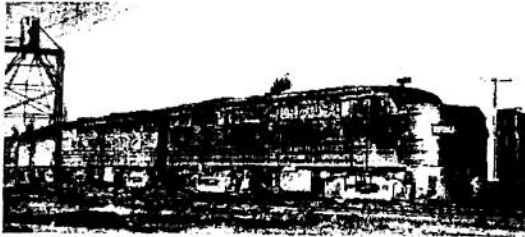
Some of the significant dates associated with the Manchester yard are -

- 1891 LVRR Geneva to Buffalo mainline built
- 1892 VanEtten Jct. to Buffalo mainline opened
- 1895 Manchester roundhouse damaged by fire, rebuilt and new oil house built

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- 1896 May 18 – Black Diamond passenger train first run
- 1916 New engine terminal and a 30 stall fireproof engine house with a 100' turntable built, along with a machine shop and power plant
- 1918 Locomotive coaling station built
- 1970 Jobs ended in the classification yard
- 1976 Merger of 7 Northeast railroads into Conrail
- 1979 Ontario County purchased Manchester to Victor rights, leased to Ontario Central RR



Engine # 590 (1964) at Manchester engine terminal



Engine # 305 (1967) at the "interlocking" tower

That the LV was leaving the roster of the American railroads in the mid-1970's took few by surprise. For many years many had seen the LV as the epitome of the bankrupt Eastern railroad, too small to be viable in a year of mergers and mega-railroads, serving an area where former sources of revenue, coal and aging industry, were drying up or threatened by ever-improving road and water competition. Linking the New York metropolitan area with the Great Lakes at the Niagara frontier, the Valley was the smallest of three – LV, Erie Lackawanna, and Penn Central – serving the region. Over fifteen years had passed since the last of the elegant Cornell red passenger trains had graced the line. Most observers in the railroad industry were more surprised the Valley had managed to hold onto the mid-70's than they were at the ultimate end of its story. Within a short period of time, large sections of the railroad were eliminated as redundant by Conrail, and it

seemed that the Route of the Black Diamond would follow its long abandoned neighbors, the Lehigh & New England and New York, Ontario & Western, into oblivion.

Mainline traffic density demanded innovations in dispatching and signaling to improve operating safety and to expedite train movements.

Unfortunately, efforts to upgrade trackage were not without tragic consequences. In the autumn of 1910 track crews had re-laid the mainline through Manchester, N.Y. with new 90-lb rails. What they did not know at the time was that one of the new rails, laid just west of the deck bridge spanning Canandaigua Outlet, was riddled with transverse fissures.

On the morning of August 25, 1911, passenger train No. 4 left Buffalo, running 40 minutes behind schedule. After adding cars at Rochester Junction, the train carried 14 cars double headed by locomotives No. 1804 and No. 2476. Heading east towards Geneva, No. 4 slowed to a speed of 25 miles per hour as it approached Manchester Yard. Nearing the east throat of the yard with a clear signal block ahead, the train began to accelerate. As they came to the Canandaigua Outlet bridge, the locomotives hit the defective rail, which began to disintegrate under the pounding of the driving wheels. By the time the sixth car of the train struck the rail, it shattered, derailing all the cars behind and spilling two of them off the bridge into the stream below. Twenty-three persons were killed outright, most of them in the wooden coaches that fell into the water. The casualty list totaled 29 killed and 62 injured, making this the worst LV passenger disaster since the infamous collision at Mud Run, PA. in 1888.



Train wreck at Canandaigua Outlet bridge in 1911

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Shifting Gears

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Railroading has always been a special kind of dangerous job. With the prestige of working for a railroad came the daily dangers. Injuries and death were always feared, the heavy weight of all railroad items and the speed of the trains created an atmosphere where all employees had to be alert at all times. Male and female employees worked all kinds of jobs. All kinds of physical and mental skills were needed. There are nearly 100 job descriptions associated with railroading.

Acknowledgements:

Some of the information and photos came from the following publications

Lehigh Valley Railroad by Robert F. Archer

Lehigh Valley Railroad by Mike Bednar

Lehigh Valley -1 & 2 by Robert J. Yanosey

Lehigh Valley -3 by Jeremy F. Plant & Richard T. Steinbrenner

NOTE: This article is published with permission of "Shifting Gears" and its editor Mr. Ken Ferries

TRAIN EXCURSION UPDATE

Your Society will again this year be hosting "Fall Foliage Excursions" in cooperation with the Finger Lakes Scenic Railway. There will be 5 trips total, 3 trips on Saturday, October 14th, and 2 trips on Sunday, October 15th. The 2 hr. trips will originate at the museum in Shortsville, NY and run to Geneva, NY and back. Trip times are 10:00AM, 12:30PM, and 3:00PM on Sat., and 12:30PM, and 3:00 PM on Sun. Ticket prices will be \$15 per person. Children who can sit on their parents laps will ride free of charge. There will be refreshments and gifts available at the museum, and of course, the museum will be open so that folks can browse our collection of RR artifacts. Call 1-585-289-8022 for reservations and trip details.

SOCIETY MEETINGS

Society meetings are now held on the third Sunday of each month at 3:00p.m. (Previously at 6:30pm) at the LVRRHS Station Museum, 8 E. High St., Shortsville, New York.

OPEN HOUSE SCHEDULE

This year, we held our Station Museum open houses on the 3rd Sunday of each month, beginning at 1:00 PM and ending at 3:00 PM, when we will then hold our monthly meetings.

We are hoping that this new schedule will allow for better attendance at the open houses, AND at the monthly meetings.

2006 MEMBERSHIP

This year has brought many challenges to us as a group. While the mortgage has been paid off, we still have the ongoing responsibility of paying the building utilities and making need repairs to the building. We need the help of each and every member of our society to keep going! If you have not already renewed your membership for 2006, won't you please do so now? If you are not sure if you renewed your membership for 2006, please contact Deb Halderman at 585-289-8022. Also, any donations to our building fund would be greatly appreciated.

OFFICERS AND TRUSTEES OF THE LEHIGH VALLEY RAILROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Acting President:	Roger Halderman	12/31/2006
Secretary:	Rita Gurewitch	12/31/2006
Treasurer:	Deborah Halderman	12/31/2007
Trustees:	Bill Young	12/31/2006
	David Halderman	12/31/2006
	Joseph Dickson	12/31/2007
	Emma Halderman	12/31/2007
	David Fleenor	12/31/2008
	Jack Tuttle	12/31/2008

These dates indicate the expiration of the present officer and trustee terms. Nominees and a ballot will be mailed to all active members in late November/ early December along with the membership renewal form for 2007.

Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society web site: www.lvrhrs.org
