

# The Black Diamond

Official Newsletter of the Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society

October 2013

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## MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

The October 2013 edition of "The Black Diamond" features full details about all upcoming Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society events during the fall as well as a real railroading story authored by Gregory Miller. Our organization will be sponsoring a holiday open house at the station museum on November 30. 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

## 2013 TRAIN EXCURSIONS CANCELLED

The Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society regrets to announce that we will not be sponsoring Fall Foliage and Santa train excursions on the Finger Lakes Railway this year because of greatly increased trip fees by the railroad. We did not want to raise our ticket prices by 60 to 95 percent. Thank you for your understanding.

## 2013 STATION MUSEUM OPEN HOUSES

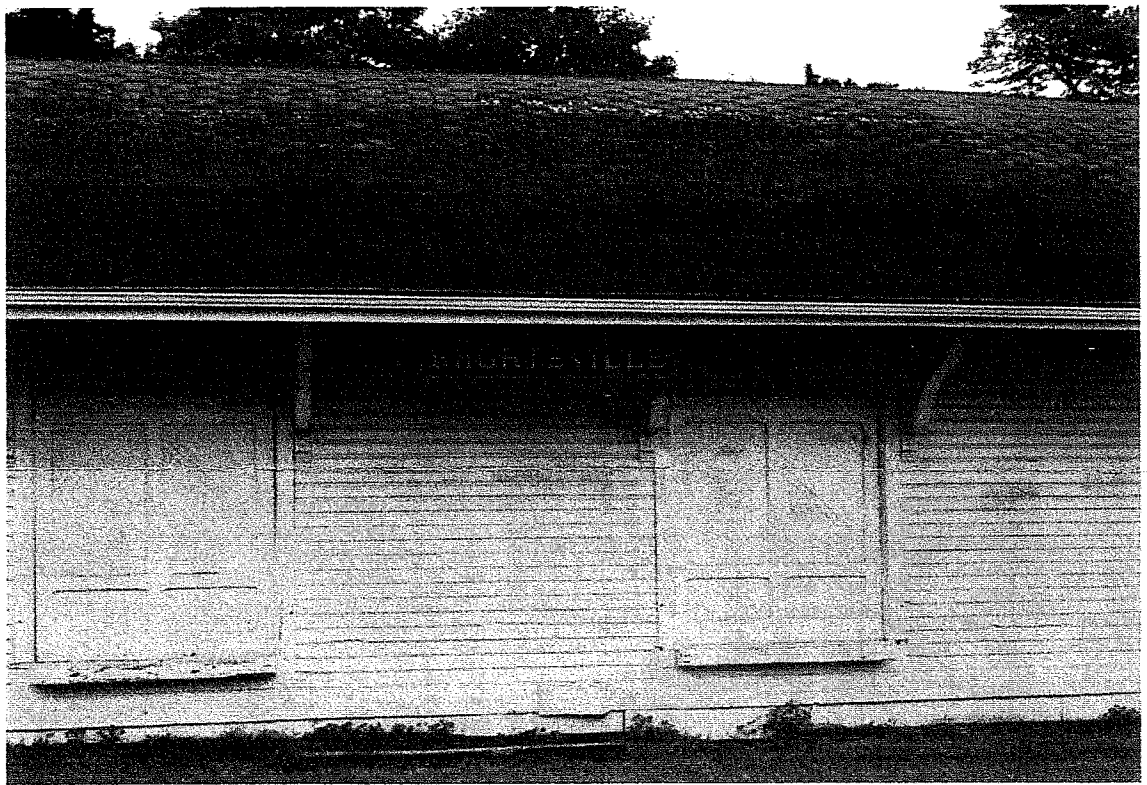
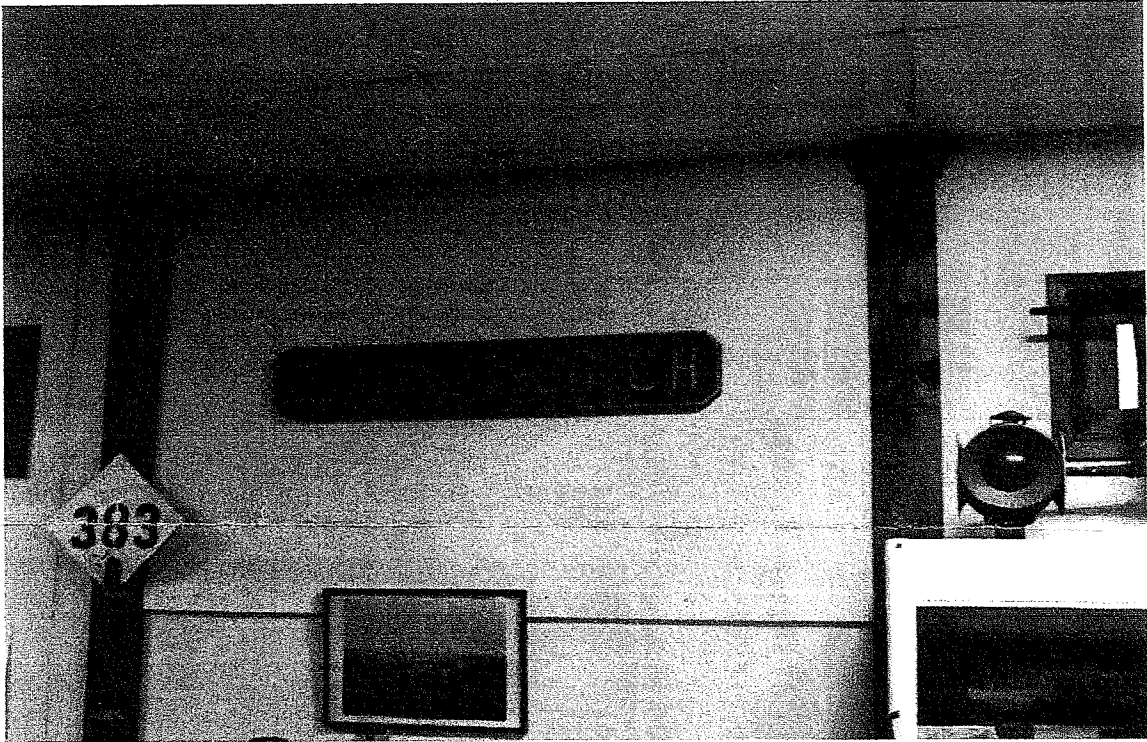
The Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society Station Museum in Shortsville, New York, was open to the public one Sunday afternoon a month from May to October this year. Open house dates were May 19, June 16, July 21, August 18, September 15, and October 20. Rail historian and author Richard Palmer of Syracuse gave a presentation at the July open house about the famous "Black Diamond" passenger train. Attendance at all of the open houses was good. Thanks to the LVRHRS members who volunteered at the station museum open houses.

## HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE TO BE HELD NOVEMBER 30

The Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society will hold a Holiday Open House at the station museum at 8 East High Street in Shortsville, New York, on Saturday, November 30, 2013. Hours will be 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Santa Claus will be on hand to visit with children. Balloon artists and carolers will provide entertainment. The station museum will be decorated for the holidays and will have operating model train displays. Snacks, beverages, and gift items will be sold at the station. Admission is free; donations are welcome.

## NEW SIGNS AT THE MUSEUM

In September, two replica Lehigh Valley Railroad station signs were donated to the LVRHRS by Keith Bednar. A Shortsville station sign is now displayed on the exterior of the station museum and a Manchester station sign is now displayed on the interior of the station museum. Thank you to Keith for his generous donation. See the following photographs of the station signs taken by Dave Halderman.



Photos by Dave Halderman



Photo by Bob Frey

Another photo of the Shortsville sign. Seated is Stewart Miller. Standing are Deb Halderman, Doug Parmele, Bernie Biekirch, Joe Dickson, Mary Frey (dressed as Phoebe Snow) and Bob Frey.

## LEHIGH VALLEY RAIL TALES

### Another Entertaining Day On The Railroad: "Limited Stop" Signal Indication

By Gregory J. Miller, Relief Agent/Operator

No two days are ever the same in the railroad business. What may start out as an ordinary day that may be boring can suddenly turn into something exciting or humorously unforgettable. Such were days at the Conrail Yard in Geneva, New York, where I worked first as an agent off the Lehigh Valley Railroad and later many years as a clerk, at the famous but rundown GY Tower located in the old New York Central Railroad yard in Geneva. The tower was the focal point of the Finger Lakes rail network. There were two agents, two clerks, and four towermen (one for each shift and a relief). I worked the afternoon clerk position and shared the tower with the towerman on duty. They were all good guys but one always seemed to be the target of jokes. His name was Gordon Willson and he worked the afternoon shift. Gordon was an extra fine railroader because he paid strict adherence to the rules. Gordon had come off the Pennsylvania Railroad and had worked the line that ran from Elmira through the Finger Lakes to the huge docks on Lake Ontario at Sodus Point. Gordon was forced to take a position at GY Tower because the PRR jobs had all but disappeared. Now to Lehigh Valley and New York Central railroad men, the Pennsylvania was a greatly unloved railroad that had messed up all the railroads in the northeast. Gordon, though an outstanding railroader, was soon to bear the brunt of constant mischief. He was referred to as a "Pigtailer," a nickname given to those off the PRR. Gordon was so precise with everything that he spent about a year looking for 14 cents missing from his checking account. Someone who was so precise was doomed to scorn working with other railroaders who knew the rules were nice to have and should be obeyed but could be bent just to make things work in "backwoods" railroading. On a hot sultry summer afternoon when the air conditioner was broken down, I was doing my clerk work and Gordon was sitting at the CTC board when a call came over the radio from the yard job crew that had gone "uptown" a few hours before to switch out some local customers. They needed the signal to come off the Auburn Road and onto the Main Line (Corning Secondary) to return to the tower and the Geneva yard. The

radio blasted, "GY 2 to GY Tower." Gordon responded, "GY Tower." The engineer said, "Gordy, we have a 'Limited Stop Indication' on the signal. What are your instructions?" Gordon responded, "A 'Limited Stop'? What's that?" In a gruff voice, the engineer said, "Yes, a 'Limited Stop'. What's going on? Gordon looked over at me and said, "Have you ever heard of a 'Limited Stop Indication'?" I said, "It must be in the employee timetable because they have pictures of the different positions and colors of signal indications." He said, "You were an operator on the Lehigh Valley. Don't you know what a 'Limited Stop' is?" My response was you better look it up. Meanwhile, the crew on the yard job was getting insistent about what to do and kept repeating the request as to what to do. Gordon had the papers flying about on his timetable and was really getting nervous. Crew: "Come on Gordy, what do you want us to do?" Gordon: "Well what does it look like?" Crew: "What do you mean what does it look like? It's a 'Limited Stop Indication'. You know, alternating red and green. What do you want us to do?" By that time, I knew it was a joke. There is always a yellow indication between a red and green signal so there was no alternating red and green indication. I just had to add a little heat to the situation when I knew what was going on so I said, "Come on Gordy, make a decision. That crew has plenty of work to do and can't be sitting around doing nothing." Gordon was wheeling and spinning around in his chair nervous as a bed bug. You could see the sweat coming off his forehead. I asked, "Are there any northbounds to worry about?" – No – "Is anything out of Dewitt or Buffalo going south?" – No -- "Well then, what are you worried about? For God's sake, Gordy, make a decision or call the dispatcher. What are you waiting for?" Finally, he was ready to notify the dispatcher that he had a 'Limited Stop Indication.' Just before he picked up the dispatcher line, I hollered out, "It's a joke, Gordy! Hang up that phone before you embarrass yourself!" Then the crew on the GY 2 came on the radio at the same time and you could hear the laughing in the cab of the engine. Gordon was so angry that his face was turned beet red but he got over it. Just another day on the railroad.

#### **MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS**

If you have not already renewed your membership for 2013, we hope that you will consider renewing for 2014. Memberships received after September 30 will be considered good through 2014. 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.lvrrhs.org](http://www.lvrrhs.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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