

PENDRAGON

Vol. 15 Number 1 THE NEWSLETTER OF THE UNADILLA VALLEY RAILWAY SOCIETY & MUSEUM Spring 2011

HAPPY NEW YEAR

We wish all of our members and readers a Healthy and Happy 2011. The Pendragon Newsletter has a New Look and additions for 2011 will include: articles of interest about railroading, with memories of the past, reports on special events, upcoming UVR&M ventures as well as a chance to get to know our active members as one will be featured in each issue in the column, "From the Hearts of Our Members" that will include excerpts from their life experiences. There will also be reports from other local and National Railway Museums and Historical Society Groups. Join now the UVR&M to continue receiving the Pendragon Newsletter.



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Schedule of Meetings

All regular meetings begin at 7 P M October through May and are held at the New Berlin Library, South Main Street, New Berlin NY.

June through September meetings are held at the UV Railroad Museum, 3 Railroad Street, New Berlin, NY.

All are welcome to attend these meetings which include a program, discussion about railroading and refreshments.

Speakers often provide informative programs coupled with the opportunity to purchase one of their railroad books.

Coming up in May, Mark Simonson, Historian, Book Writer, Freelance Researcher and writer for a column twice weekly in The Oneonta Star will present a "mock newscast" featuring historical data including old advertisements.

In June John Taibi about his books and more about the Lyon Brook Bridge Exhibit. See Page 2.

| DATE | MEETINGS SPEAKERS EVENTS |
|--------------------------|---|
| January 3 rd | Installation of Officers |
| February 7 th | Alan Fairbrother "The Loomis Gang" |
| March 7 th | Canceled due to enormous snow. |
| April 4 th | Alan Fairbrother "More Loomis Gang" |
| May 2 nd | Mark Simonson, Oneonta |
| June 6 th | John Taibi |
| July 16 | Christmas in July Five Authors on site |
| August 2- 7 | Otsego County Fair Float and Booth |
| September 3 | Annual Picnic |

DEDICATION OF LYON BROOK BRIDGE EXHIBIT

BY John Taibi

On December 5th, 2010, the Chenango County Historical Society, 25 Rexford Street, Norwich, NY, dedicated its new outdoor exhibit designed to perpetuate the memory of the New York, Ontario & Western Railway's Lyon Brook Bridge.

Funded through a grant from the Norwich Lions Club, Director Alan Estus, along with his assistant Diane, organized a group of volunteers to design, build, and bring to fruition this most recent exhibit, which is helping to bring about a complete modernization of the CCHS museum both inside and out.

Incorporated into the exhibit are artifacts from the "new" bridge that was built in 1894, which include the date stone and a steel girder section, and a storyboard that — through photographs and captions — tells the story of both Lyon Brook Bridges that were erected by the New York & Oswego Midland Railroad (1869) and New York, Ontario & Western Railway (1894).

On Dedication Day, at 2 pm, a crowd of nearly 60 persons gathered in a wintry setting to listen to speakers and to witness the unveiling of the exhibit.

In my remarks, I advised the interested people that: "The Lyon Brook Bridge was one of Chenango County's most notable engineering feats. It was over 800 feet long, and soared 160 feet over the brook whose name it bears. When it was first built, we visited it to watch in amazement as the structure took shape over a gorge then thought to be unbridgeable. Then, when it was completed in 1869, we were in attendance to witness the first train to cross from hill to hill, or maybe even witness disaster if the bridge failed! But, it held fast and did so for another 25 years until it was replaced by a new bridge."

"When the new Lyon Brook Bridge was under construction, we again visited the site to watch, again in amazement, as the new steel structure took shape surrounding the old iron trestle, while at the same time not delaying the passage of a single train! That's quite a feat on a stretch of single track railroad. But, the O&W's assistant engineer, Curtis E.

Knickerbockers, was up to the task and when the new bridge was finished the old bridge was dismantled from under it."

"So, you may be asking yourself, 'why we are not at the site of the bridge to celebrate its memory rather than here in Norwich many miles away?' The answer that it was the Lyon Brook Bridge that allowed the City of Norwich to become the great railroad center that it was.

"During 1867, Norwich offered up to an incredible amount of \$1,000,000. In construction aid to any railroad that brought its line directly into the community. At that time, President Littlejohn of the NY&OM RR was projecting his railroad to pass to the north of Norwich, but, learning of the community's financial desire to assist in having a railroad, he altered the course of the line and history. The obstacle however was crossing the gorge of Lyon Brook."

"But, the bridge was indeed completed, Norwich financed \$500,000 in construction aid — the second largest amount of aid provided to the railroad behind only Oswego, and Norwich did receive the railroad's shops, yards, offices, station, and designation as the road's Northern Division headquarters, It was the hundreds of men — and some women — who worked for the railroad had lived in Norwich, shopped locally, and paid taxes. Besides working in the shops, yards and offices, and running trains across Lyon Brook Bridge, railroad employees were also merchants, school board members, aldermen, postmasters and mayors. It was the Lyon Brook Bridge that made this all possible."

"Although the Lyon Brook Bridge was built to support the weight of a legion of passing trains, it was also a very humanly (designed) structure. It allowed us to walk across it, it enjoyed having its picture taken by us, it reveled in the gaiety of a picnic being held within its shadow, and it inspired affection and love."

"Therefore, when the Lyon Brook Bridge was dismantled 9 years after its railroad was abandoned, its "soul" was blown about by the winds of change and fell upon those people whose lives are touched by its onetime presence. I

never knew the Lyon Brook Bridge, but I believe I have part of it within my heart and soul — and I think you do too; otherwise you wouldn't be here today. The Lyon Brook Bridge transcends its job of shouldering the weight of passing trains, which it did very well, in that it is still fondly remembered by many ordinary people who recognized it as a wonderful structure that was important to a livelihood of families and Norwich alike. That is the great success of the bridge, and that is why we are here today to celebrate its memory."

"At this time, I would like to ask Helen Ogden LoPiccolo to unveil this new exhibit for you to admire. In 1944 Helen and her boyfriend Dominic LoPiccolo visited the Lyon Brook Bridge, along with his section foreman father and mother. When Helen and Dominic left the Bridge that day they had become engaged to be married. The Lyon Brook Bridge, it seems was a pretty good matchmaker, too!"

With these remarks concluded, Mrs. LoPiccolo pulled away the cloth and uncovered the storyboard for this new exhibit, and it was then that it was officially dedicated.



Photos from the dedication document.

Notes from Members

Sam Senn sent in the following information from the "Guinness Rail" where he found the following:

- **The first locomotive headlight** consisted of a fire of pine knots on a flat car pushed in front of the locomotive on the South Carolina Railroad in 1831. During the 1840's and 1850's candles and whale oil were burned in reflector lamps. Gas and kerosene lamps were introduced in 1859. Electric headlamps first appeared in 1881. The 'figure 8' oscillating headlight was introduced in 1936, and the sealed-beam headlight in 1946.

- **Sandboxes were first fitted to American locomotives** in 1836, following a plague of grasshoppers in Pennsylvania. On August 1st it was decided to use them on the Tusculumbia, Courtland & Decatur Railroad. The sand was sprinkled on to the rails and it prevented the engines slipping on the squashed insects.

- **Traffic regulations** in 1830 on the earliest railways were regulated on a time-interval basis. In conjunction with this, 'kite' or 'ball' signals were used to indicate when a train should leave a station. The kite consisted of a canvas screen mounted on rings. When spread out it indicated 'danger', when furled, 'proceed'. The 'ball' signal showed 'line clear' when hoisted to the top of a post. Hence the North American railroad term 'highball' for a clear line. For the opening of the Great Western Railway to Reading, on March 30 1840, Daniel Gooch (1816-89), the locomotive superintendent issued an instruction that if the ball at the entrance to Reading station was not visible then the train must not pass it.

- **Strange fuels have been used for steam locomotives** to keep railways running in difficult times. On a 600mm (1 ft x 11 1/2 in) gauge branch of a railway in Chile, llama dung and dried moss were burned on two 0-4-0 tanks built by Orenstein & Koppel of Berlin. In South America, during a crop surplus, coffee beans were used as fuel. In 1919 during a coal shortage dried fish was used as locomotive fuel in Russian Turkistan. For this purpose the Soviet Government requisitioned 8000 tons from Aral Sea fishermen.

- **Alan Fairbrother** told those gathered during his presentation at a meeting last summer about the opening day of the Liverpool & Manchester Railway on Sept. 15, 1825. that William Huskisson, member of Parliament for several constituencies including Liverpool, died after he was run over by the Stephenson's **ROCKET**. He was taken to the hospital on the engine **NORTHUMBRIAN**, driven by George Stephenson who, on the journey, established a world speed record of 58 km/h or 36 miles per hour. The first passenger-train accident in the USA occurred on Nov. 9, 1833 in New Jersey. One carriage overturned and 12 of the 24 passengers were seriously injured.

- **Peter Iorio** shared during our annual summer picnic about seeing Hobos and Burns at the Grand Central Station Rail Yards when he was young and lived down state. When asked what is the difference in a Bum or Hobo he remarked "A Hobo hops the box cars to reach their destination and a Bum jumps on to ride where ever it takes them with no destination in mind."

Want a train ride? Members and friends of the UVR Society and Museum will HOP ABOARD the Cooperstown & Charlotte Valley Railroad at the Milford station, Sat. April 16, 1:45 pm. The riding fun includes Easter Egg Roll & Hunt with Prizes, Free Goodies & Refreshments, Two Hours of fun with the Easter Bunny & friends. Seating is limited so reservations and prepayment are required by April 3rd for the group rate. You can call Pat Gifford at 847-9484 for further information. The Price is Adults, \$17; Seniors \$16; Children (3-12), \$14; under 3 free.

Special thanks to both old and new contributors. In particular thanks go to NBT Bank and New York Pizzeria. Remember to patronize those businesses that support the efforts of the UVR&M.

There are currently twenty-five copies of this book, "The Baby Railroad", by Reverend Ernest Clemens available for \$5 each (plus postage if mailing is required). Here is an excerpt from that book.

The Baby Railroad

Along the eastern rim of Chenango and Madison counties in the grassy heart of New York State runs a rusty, single-track, standard-gauge railroad, twenty miles long. Its name is the Unadilla Valley Railway, but the trail crews of the New York, Ontario & Western, who pick up its Manhattan-bound milk at New Berlin, call it the Buckwheat and Dandelion; sometimes just the B and D. The right of way averages about thirty-five feet from fence to fence, and the fences are imperfect barriers to the Holsteins that alternately graze and doze behind them. When a Holstein wanders onto the Unadilla's tracks the Unadilla's little ninety-eight ton Mogul comes to a stop and Alfred Patrick, the conductor, shoos her back to pasture.

Reports from other Stations

UTICA & MOHAWK VALLEY CHAPTER of the NRHS INC.

Meetings held on Fridays at 7 pm. At the Zion Lutheran Church Hall on French & Burrstone Roads in New Hartford NY. April 8th meeting will be Wayne's promotion for the upcoming Elkhart, IN Amtrak trip.

Other Books available at the Museum are:

- "Days Along the Buckwheat and Dandelion" By Fred Pugh
- "Railroading along the Upper Susquehanna" and "The Oneonta Roundhouse" by Jim Loudon
- "UV the Life and Times of a Small Railroad" by William Young

From The Hearts of Our Members

Memories of the Rails By Member Peter Iorio

The words *RAILROAD* and *TRAINS* have a special meaning to me. I can associate these two words with my Grandfather, Pietro, and my Father, John, known as Giovanni.

My Grandfather, Pietro Iorio, was born on April 20, 1888 in Naples, Italy. He was born as an only child and his parents died young. As a young man he left his homeland and immigrated to the United States of America with his cousin,

Giovanni Iorio.

They arrived at Ellis Island and resided in Jersey City, New Jersey in 1909. He migrated to an Italian neighborhood where he was introduced to Rose Donatelli. Rose Donatelli was born on December 1, 1890 in Abruzzi, Italy and was one of 16 children. She migrated to the United States to Jersey City, New Jersey with her brothers and sisters.

Pietro and Rose were married on October 6, 1911. They started the first American Generation with their family of five children. The first born was my father, Giovanni, born on July 13th 1913 and later known as John.

My Grandparents moved to the Fordham area of the Bronx in New York to raise their family. Pietro and his cousin both worked for the New York Transit Authority. Pietro's Badge number was 2. He had help build the tracks for the I R T and the 3rd Ave. El Lines, and later expanded the tracks to other boroughs. He also maintained the tracks throughout the years.

As my grandfather was laying tracks for the city and expanding city transit on a larger scale, his oldest son, John, was fascinated and began building his own HO and Lionel scale model trains. He was a member of the H O and Lionel clubs of Long Island, New York.

John would build the trains from scale models and design his own layouts on wooden platforms. He would imitate and create his own city, towns, villages, and mountains. The details of his work would not go unnoticed. Once he switched on the transformer his work would come to life; you became part of his world and were fascinated by it. His imagination became just as real as his father's did in real life for so many people. My grandfather was a dedicated worker, and took pride in his work for the City Transit Services until his retirement at the age of 72.

When I was young and rode the city subways, I was reminded that he'd built the tracks. Hearing the clicky clack of the train wheels on the rails made me proud of his hard work. It paid off for millions of people to be able to commute to their destinations through the five boroughs of New York City.

He retired at his country house in Lake Carmel, New York and enjoyed growing vegetables in his garden. He died on April 10, 1977 at the age of 89. His wife Rose died on March 20th, 1991 at the age of 101. They lived their American dream and considered the United States their home. Neither one ever went back to Italy.

I am proud that my grandfather was part of the building of this industry in the inner city of New York City. Today when I see and hear a train, or see a crossroad, or stop as a train passes by my memories of my grandfather and father live on. I have a 25 cent subway token from that time period, as well as a very special box containing one of my father's HO scale trains that still runs today. I am saving these family treasures for future generations to help them remember our wonderful heritage. The Unadilla Valley Railway Society and Museum that I take an active part in also keeps railroading and family history alive in my heart.

[Editor's note: Peter is an enthusiastic trustee currently in charge of public relations and fund raising. We are glad to have you "on board".]

UV Railway – A Brief Background

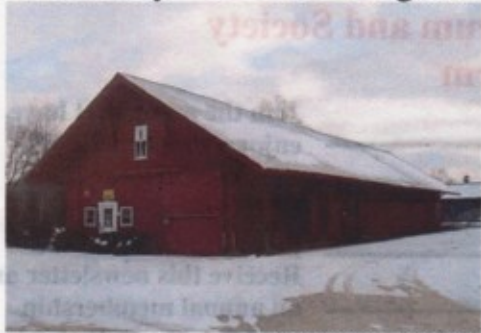


Photo and graphics by Vince Bauer

Railroad transportation had improved market access, especially to New York City and the rest of the United States but was only slowly emerging in the 1860's. The Unadilla Valley Railway opened for service in 1895, and the New Berlin Branch of the New York Ontario & Western Railroad was purchased in 1941 by the Unadilla Valley Railway. It operated continually until 1960 when it was eventually dismantled. It is part of the richness of local history and recognized as an entity that needs to be preserved.

What began as the dream of five local men, George Wolfangle, William Fliedner, Carl Carpenter, Michael Schowe and Floyd Reeser, sixteen years ago became a reality when the Constitution and by-laws of the Unadilla Valley Railway Society & Museum were filed in 1995. Since that time the group has grown to as many as 140 members who worked to preserve the Unadilla Valley's Railway heritage. The UVRs&M is located in "The Depot" on Railroad Street in New Berlin where artifacts of the area's proud and irreplaceable railroad heritage are displayed through photographs, archives, documents, maps and the restoration of the depot structure and railcars. The museum also contains images of bygone theology and interprets the economical and social impact the railroads had on the growth and evolution of this area in agriculture, industry and commerce.

The Unadilla Valley Museum is open on Saturday afternoons from 1p.m. to 5 p.m. when the weather is warm. The Museum contains exhibits that provide visitors with a visual record of the evolution of railroad technology. These exhibits also highlight the unique and distinctive features of our area's railroad history. The society and museum promotes research into the history of railroading and preserves the archival records of the Unadilla Valley Railroad history. The interests of the society include all aspects of the railroads that affected our area's growth and development and play a vital role in preservation of same.

Envisioning a broad and significant role for volunteers in preserving, restoring and interpreting the collection

for visitors, contributions of the society began with the design of the museum and continue with the restoration, operation, and maintenance of the museum's historic equipment and collections. Volunteers are involved in fund-raising efforts through grant writing, the sale of shirts, caps, key chains and pertinent books, in addition to historic research and artifact preservation and interpretation. They also create award winning floats for the Youth Day's Parade each summer. Over the years, the successes of the Unadilla Valley Railway Society & Museum have been achieved through the enthusiasm, commitment and support of its many members. Whether you are a railroad historian or railroad employee, or just interested in the romance of railroad history, the UVR Society can bring you in touch with the past glory of railroading.

Modest membership fees entitle members to participate in monthly meetings, work on museum projects such as the restoration of a half car, and enjoy recreational activities with model train environments similar to the real thing of years gone by. Members receive "The Pendragon", a periodic newsletter named for the locomotive that pulled the train through the valleys of the western foothills of the Catskills when New York State was among the five states that provided 50% of the nation's dairy products and when hops were the most successful of all cash crops for central New York.

The Unadilla Valley Railway Society & Museum is a 501 (c) (3), non-profit, tax exempt organization. General membership meetings are held at 7 p.m. the first Monday of every month: June-Sept. at the Depot, Oct.-May at the New Berlin Library. (However, a change in the Constitution and Bi-Laws may eliminate winter meetings going forward and consolidate the April - Sept Meetings) You can be a part of this and other decisions by bringing your vote to the meetings. The Board of Trustees meets every 3rd Monday from 2 at p.m.



Award winning Float, "The Train that Could" built by Alan Fairbrother who is peaking out at us. At the Otsego County Fair August 2010

Unadilla Valley Railway Museum and Society Membership Form

Join the many that have enjoyed the benefits of membership, including meetings, programs, projects and events. Receive this newsletter and an annual membership card for you and/or your family

Name _____
 Street Address _____
 City, State, Zip _____
 Phone _____
 Email _____

Annual Membership Dues

| | |
|----------------------------------|----------|
| Single Membership | \$15.00 |
| Family Member | \$25.00 |
| Life Membership | \$225.00 |
| Life Family Membership | \$250.00 |
| Organization/Business Membership | \$100.00 |
| Donation | \$ _____ |

Join or renew now for membership through December 2011 and receive an official Membership Card and each issue of the Pendragon throughout the year.

The Unadilla Valley Railway Museum is a 501 (c)(3) tax exempt organization chartered by the NYS board of Regents and is tax free. Send Dues and Donations To: Gladly Slentz, Treasurer, PO Box 751, New Berlin, NY 13411.



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