

# PENDRAGON

The Newsletter of the Unadilla Valley Railway Society & Museum PO Box 751, New Berlin NY \* Spring 2009

## UNADILLA VALLEY RAILWAY SOCIETY AND MUSEUM MONTHLY MEETINGS

Time: 7 PM at the following-  
May thru September Meetings  
Railroad Museum-Railroad Ave  
New Berlin, NY  
October thru April-held at the New Berlin Library, Main Street  
New Berlin, NY

### May Meeting Agenda

Place: Railroad Museum

Time: 7 PM

**Guest Speaker: Chris Lord, Chief Mechanical Officer of the Cooperstown and Charlotte Valley Railroad. Chris has been a member since 1996.**

### Business Meeting

### Refreshments

### Officers

President.....Samuel Senn  
Vice President.....Ralph Scopo  
Recording Secretary... Liz. Ryan  
Treasurer ...Bonnie-Jean Bauer  
Corresponding-Secretary  
Rev. Ernie Clemens  
Member At Large ...Bill Fliedner  
Executive Advisor  
....George Wolfangle  
Director.....Pat Gifford

Dear Members of the Unadilla Valley Railway Society and Museum, It has been a GREAT five months of 2009. We have Elected new officers and enjoyed a New Year's party with a schedule of exciting events made at our January meeting. Several new enthusiastic people joined us during the Spring months-- Vincent and Maryann

Cecere, Lina Demeree, Elizabeth Ryan, Alan Fairbrother, and Ruth Gregory. At the February meeting we were happy with the new model trains and total display that had been recently purchased to add to the thousands of artifacts in our museum. The \$12,000. investment will look really great when it is all installed. Vinny is going to help put it all together in good weather. The minutes express the importance of our fund raising. Membership dues are only \$15.00 and will cover until 1-1-2010. If the membership dues are over due it was decided to let people who pay now start and not have to make up any missed years. The March meeting was cancelled. A good April meeting was held with three new members joining. Joan Barr, Bill Brown and Jerome Kupris. Dorothy Padget, a faithful support person, who has helped with such projects as building of the floats each year for the parade at New Berlin Youth Days also attended. The railroad film was scheduled to show but the television VCR part malfunctioned and we were unable to show it. This film will be re-scheduled at another monthly meeting. We were asked to think about volunteering to help on Saturday afternoons this summer while the Museum is open from 1 until 5 p m. It was decided that two people will be required in order to open on Saturdays. We were reminded that the May meeting speaker will feature Chris Lord of the Cooperstown-Charlotte Valley Railroad Train Rides and the Leather Stocking Railway Historical Society in Cooperstown.

## A NOTE TO CONTRIBUTORS

*The UVRS&M is a 501©3 tax-exempt organization chartered by the New York State Board of Regents. Checks payable to Unadilla Valley Railway Society and Museum may be sent to P O Box 751, New Berlin, NY 13411*

At the UVRS&M a nice collection of reading materials and books that can be purchased are available. Come and spend time looking at our display and enjoy the articles. Among the interesting articles is the **NEW YORK ARCHIVES**, the spring '09 edition containing several pages written by William Beardslee, born and raised in New Berlin now an Attorney in CO The article, "THE BUCKWEAT AND DANDELION" is followed by some history and noteworthy articles about the short line railroads. William is an historian with vast interest in this area and gives the Unadilla Valley a greater knowledge of railroads in our area. William plans of being in New Berlin vacationing at his home soon.

Other articles and many books are being gathered now for the display. Books for sale are; **DAYS ALONG THE BUCKWHEAT & DANDELION** by Fred Pugh. This book is about 200 pages of wonderful stories and a large number of photographs on each page, a must for any railroad enthusiast or as a gift. We have only a few copies left for only \$45.00.

Continued on page 4.

Article to follow was part of the January 2009 meeting honoring the original members and election of new officers

## A Bit of History of the Unadilla Valley Railway Society and Museum

In around May of 1995 George Wolfangle was sitting at Angel Heights on Angel Hill in the town of New Berlin "chatting" with four men; William Fliedner, Michael Schowe, Carl Carpenter, and Jeff Utter. He shared his hopes and dreams of having a Museum that would keep the train era alive for the generations to come. These men agreed and held their first meeting in August in a cabin on George's property on County route 13 near Georges' homestead. From this meeting to now great things have happened.

Many hours of hard work and a lot of money is the reason we are here tonight to recognize George as he passes the Presidency on to Sam Senn and takes the new position as Executive Advisor. George has earned this prestige title by his faithfulness over the last 13 years. Now as we start the 14<sup>th</sup> year of making sure these 5 men's dreams continue to grow, we salute each of them.

William (Bill) who is here tonight has continued to work and be faithful to his commitment. In May of 2000 Bill earned his Honorary Life Membership.

Michael (Mike) Schowe was granted honorary Life Membership in 2001. He was unable to come here tonight as his work is often late and a previous commitment, ironically with one of the founding members, Carl Carpenter, was scheduled for the same time. Carl was granted his Honorary Life Membership in 2001. Both Mike and Carl send their congratulations and shared that George has truly been an "Conductor" if you will...working and sharing to build the current Society and Museum. The fifth founding Member, Jeff Utter was not reached and records show he has resigned. Some of the interesting stories shared during the past two weeks has certainly enabled the newer

members an opportunity to realize the tremendous hours of work and dedication George has for this growing organization.

During the more recent years many noteworthy things come to mind including parade trophies, a June 2007 meeting with about 100 people attending, trips to various places to bring back memorabilia like a huge RR Crossing Sign, 20 Railway Ties (weighing about 300 pounds each) generous donations and purchases from many people to include original and valuable maps sent to us by William Beardslee, Fort Collins, CO. three glass show cases from Joan Brownell, room sized model trains built by Vincent Cecere, and other items from the collections of many. It would be impossible to note the many donations that need to be recognized here. Noteworthy is that we now have just issued membership number 121 to Vince Cecere and his wife who reside in West Burlington, NY. Notes for George include found memories from Don Rickard, an Honorary Member, currently unable to attend due to illness. Don was an active member from 8-5-02 and held many position during these years. He plans on attending meetings when he is physically able. Don lives in the Unadilla area.

Our Organization has certainly been enhanced by the capable direction of our current Secretary-Treasurer Bonnie Bauer. The organization has grown with her continued devotion of telling the public about our UVRS&M with Newspaper and Television articles. She has worked hours bringing the records up to date and making sure insurance, electric bills, inspections (fire and land) etc. are followed thru with proper compliance. Her fun ideas for decorating floats for the parade and games and snacks for the meetings are appreciated by all.

At the end of the meeting George was presented with a special plaque as a symbol of our appreciation for all he has done and continues to do.

Other recognitions were noted as well. This meeting was attended by many and enjoyed by all. A great way to start the New Year.

**BABY RAILROAD** some parts are taken from *FORTUNE* Magazine issue August 1938.

Because this was written over 70 years ago it should qualify this article as history.

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. It's name is the Unadilla Valley Railway, but the train 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. Milton Moore, our 99 year old member of the current organization has told about getting animals off the track as they liked the green grass growing near the rails and ties that were often near the water and produced nice green grazing grass. The train also stops frequently at Sweet's Station (now a florist shop and near enough to the road for us all to see on route 8 going north out of New

Berlin). Near there Milton often tells that a bad electrical storm came up and they stopped the train for the men to go to a farm house that was on the way past a tree in the open field. Lightning struck the tree just as the crew were inside the farm house. While they were inside the lady fixed them nice sandwiches. He remarked that near Sweets Station they had to slow up as the cars traveling on route 8 would keep going and not stop for the train. Despite these and other interruptions, the train of the Unadilla Valley Railway succeeded in running the entire length of the line and back again twice almost everyday of the year and sometimes three times. In the winter, when the snow banks south of Bridgewater were higher than the train, according to Milton, this would be something of a feat. More than once the train crews had spent the night on the tracks shoveling and trying to clear the tracks. Once Paul Stillman, the station agent at Leonardsville told about one winter when he and the general superintendent took a train out of there on Tuesday and didn't reach New Berlin until Thursday night, a trip of only fifteen miles because of the high snow. From the clock-loud lobby of the Eagle Hotel, the engine would pull its load from New

Berlin to Bridgewater and back again morning and noon, day after day without haste and without failure. Once in the autumn it jumped the track and only once in forty-three years was there an accident so shattering that the train could not run that day. Never, in spite of the trucks that flash past more insolently every year on the N. Y. route 8, has there been such a dearth of traffic that the train had no excuse to make its trip. For the Unadilla was to the 15,000 farmers and villagers who lived in the valley exactly what the whole \$25,000,000 railroad plant was to the other citizens of the U.S. In the course of the year it brought the valley some 10,000 tons of coal (the Pennsylvania Line carries 78,000,000) and 750 tons of cattle (the Chicago & North Western carried 465,000) and it carries several hundred carloads of the valley's biggest cash crop, milk, on their way to the children of the Bronx. The Unadilla's train is seldom more than twelve cars long, but it is the way Moses Cronk at River Forks gets the grain and feed from which he made his living. It is the way the Babcock farm-implement plant at Leonardsville gets its ten or twenty annual carloads of steel. It was the way Archie Bingham at South Edmeston got an occasional load of shavings from Towanda to

nest his 20,000 hens. It also gave a livelihood to Alfred Patrick and thirty-eight other local people, and it paid \$1,350 toward the \$53,000 annual tax budget of the village and township of New Berlin (population 2,000). All in all it is hard to see how the people of the valley could get along without their railroad. It may not have been as big as the Kraft-Phenix cheese factory at South Edmeston, which employed fifty-five people, but its revenues were probably a little bigger than the New Berlin A & P store's \$64,308 in 1937.

To appreciate just how deeply the Unadilla was embedded in the green and white mosaic of valley life, the best was to ride with Alfred Patrick in the caboose of his midday train. It would leave as soon as Pat and Howard Cadwell, the brakeman, and Fred Clark, the engineer, and George Moore, the fireman, came back from their dinner. It was no use looking at your watch for the Unadilla's last printed schedule as it went out with the passenger service nine years before. But now the train would be all made up; two boxcars and two coal cars, all empty and bearing foreign names as the Unadilla owned no cars except work cars, snowplow and a caboose. Leaving the New Berlin yard, you could see the old passenger coaches rotting

among the burdocks on the big Y where the train would turn around after its trip. Now, Spring of 2009, one can see the half-car (old passenger coach) that is owned by UVRS&M as it is standing on the East side of the Building on Railroad Avenue. It is boarded up waiting for members to restore it.

Going on with bits and pieces from the BABY RAILROAD....Soon the train would be in open country; George has 150 pounds of pressure up and Fred takes the first crossing at a full twenty miles an hour. The caboose rocks like an old interurban trolley, but through the open window a grime-screened Barbizon landscape unreels at a dream like pace that lets you see every trillium and tanager in the marshy woodlands, and the steel barrette on the hair of the farmer's wife in her laundry shaded yard. Now you are passing the ill-fated gravel pit that the Unadilla bought and equipped in 1931. It cost \$205,000 and had sold almost no stone at all, but more of that later. The bell rings, the train is stopping; we have covered almost five miles, and it is in South Edmeston.

I.L. Richer, the big grain and feed dealer, has a branch here, and Archie Bingham's poultry farm near by is the biggest in New York state. The biggest thing in South Edmeston and

in fact the biggest shipper on the Unadilla, is the clean new Phenix Cheese plant. Phenix, then part of Kraft-Phenix and National Dairy, brought in cream by the carload, trucks with local milk, churns them into curd, and sends that by the carload to be finished into Philadelphia Cream Cheese at Jersey City on the Lackawanna. All told, its inbound cream comes to above 200 carloads a year and its outbound curd to almost as much. The loading platform is up a ramp with a 6 percent grade, the only really tough grade on the whole railroad. They delivered two cars of cream there on the back trip from Bridgewater early in the mornings and when the tracks had dew on them it was slippery work and the locomotive some times tried three times before it got them up. The locomotive brought down two express cars full of empty cans and one iced with twenty-five tons of curd for Jersey City. That's seven cars plus the caboose to pull out of South Edmeston.\*\*to be continued in the next issue of the Pendragon.

Continued from page 1

**A SHORT LINE** book by Wm. Young \$12. **BABY RAILROAD** by Ernie Clemens and many others to read in, borrow or to purchase. We also have Railroad caps, shirts, Key holders, and pens for sale.

# Unadilla Valley Railway Museum and Society Membership Form

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_  
 Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
 e-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

Join the 129 people  
 who are or have been  
 members and receive  
 our newsletter and  
 enjoy our many events  
 each year. Families &  
 children are welcome.

Single member.....\$15.00 per year.....()  
 Family Member...\$25.00 per year.....()  
 Life membership...\$250.00  
 Donation only.....\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Thank You!

*All joining now or renewing will cover you until 1-1-2010*  
*A membership card along with the Pendragon publications*  
*will be sent to you.*

The UVRM is a 501 © 3 tax exempt organization chartered by the NIAS board of Regents and is tax free.  
 Send To: Bonnie Jean Bauer, Treasurer, of UVRM PO Box 751, New Berlin, NY 13411.



George Wolfangle after showing the inside of the Unadilla Valley Railway Society and Museum to a group of young students. The building in the parking lot is an old railroad workmen's shanty. These were located about half way between train stops near the tracks. The workmen would walk the tracks to fix any problems and could store some tools in the shanty. If it rained or snowed the shanty came in handy as well. We were blessed to have this donated to us a few years ago. George opens it to show the inside after the Saturday free tours. Markings on the walls are interesting and include dates in the 1800's.

From

UNADILLA VALLEY RAILWAY  
SOCIETY AND MUSEUM  
RAILROAD AVENUE  
PO BOX 751  
NEW BERLIN, NY 13411

TO: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Building a float for the New Berlin Youth Days;  
seen here are Milton Moore, Dorothy Padget  
and Biff Pylinski



**IN MEMORY OF  
MILTON MOORE**

UVRS&M long time member Milton Moore died recently. Milton was known as the oldest member of our organization as well as the longest living person in the Pittsfield area. He was also famous for being a contributing artist at the American Folk Art Museum, New York City. Many articles can be found in newspapers, journals and magazines such as The New Yorker, The Folk Art, Town of Pittsfield (a history book) where his name is mentioned 38 times. Milton could be seen at all our meetings, in summer riding the lawnmower at the two properties owned by the UVRS&M as well as riding on the floats in the parades. Milton was active in all our meetings and will be greatly missed.