

Roof Repair Completed

As you can see from the “before” and “after” pictures at the right, our “paint the roof” project is now complete. The total cost was \$9,170 and was paid for by donations from members and a \$4,400 grant from the R. C. Smith Foundation of Norwich. Thank you to everyone who contributed to this project.



Charter Updated

Our Provisional Charter was long out of date and we have now updated it through the NY State Education Department and approval by the NY Board of Regents. We now have five years to upgrade our Provisional Charter to an Absolute Charter. We have a lot of work ahead of us to accomplish this, so the Board will have to focus on it.



Successful Tour on Aug 20

On Saturday, August 20, 2022, we conducted a tour of UV-related facilities in New Berlin and Hoboken hosted by Paul Straney. What started out as a 3-stop tour (museum area, former Beardslee Farm and the UV Yard in New Berlin) for 14 folks, became a 2-stop tour when there was lots of interest in the first two stops and time ran out. Thanks to all who participated. We learned a lot about giving tours are likely to do this again. Watch this space.

Up and Down the Tracks

*** **WANTED: PUBLICITY PERSON** for the Unadilla Valley Railway Society & Museum. Responsibilities include developing a publicity strategy for our organization which would use free and low cost resources to promote our events and be the driving force in its implementation. Requirements include e-mail, internet and FaceBook access and some proficiency in using each. Previous experience doing publicity is helpful but not required. Being located in the New Berlin area is helpful but not required. With some knowledge of New Berlin and vicinity, most of this work can be done remotely with occasional help from a local assistant. This is an unpaid volunteer position. If you'd be willing, please send us an email to uvrs@stny.rr.com .

*** We would like to take this opportunity to thank **Richard Greco**, who currently owns the former Beardslee Farm, for opening his home and property to our group during the walking tour on August 20th, and also for personally showing us around and explaining the history of this marvelous property. His graciousness was appreciated by one and all, and made for a lovely afternoon.

*** New members: John Roberts of Jacksonville FL and Kevin Phillips of New Berlin.

*** Thanks to Richard Greco and his work crew for work around the museum on July 9th. The crew consisted of: Evan Iervolino, Brian Curtin, Sian DaRos, Joseph Abdallah, Logan Peric and James Mandras.

*** Mark Robson visited the museum from Binghamton recently and created a video of his visit. Find it at www.YouTube.com, then search for UNADILLA VALLEY RAILWAY MUSEUM.

*** If you could change ONE thing in the Pendragon to improve it, what would it be? Send us an email.

*** Talk to us: send email to uvrs@stny.rr.com .

*** Be safe as you maneuver up & down the tracks this fall.

On the Back Cover: This is an aerial view of the UV yard in New Berlin in the 1950s — about the same time that the feature story was written.

ZOOM MEETINGS CONTINUE

Starting in 2021, we have held our monthly program meetings via ZOOM. It is an easy-to-use on-line meeting facility in which participants can see and hear a presentation and each other. Our meetings are scheduled for the 3rd Saturday of each month at 1:00 PM (Eastern time). You may join us from anywhere in the country. Email us at uvrs@stny.rr.com with questions or to get started.

Timetable — Schedule of Upcoming Events

Thu	Oct 6	1:00	Board Meeting	Conf Call
Sat	Oct 15	1:00	Program Meeting Topic and speaker TBA	ZOOM
Thu	Nov 3	1:00	Board Meeting	Conf Call
Sat	Nov 19	1:00	Program Meeting Topic and speaker TBA	ZOOM
Thu	Dec 1	1:00	Board Meeting	Conf Call
Sat	Dec 17	1:00	Program Meeting Topic and speaker TBA	ZOOM

The museum is closed for the winter except by appointment.

Notes:

UVRS&M: UVRS&M Museum, 10 Railroad St, New Berlin NY 13411

TBA: to be announced, see the web site.

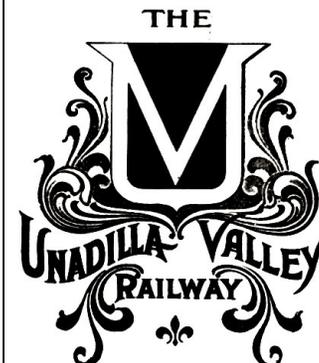
To participate in ZOOM meetings or Conference Calls, send a request by email to uvrs@stny.rr.com

Check our web site at www.uvrs.org for meeting details and late changes.

If you have pictures, videos, stories or memories of the UV Railroad, we'd like a copy of them. If we could borrow the photos, we'll scan them in, add them to our picture data base and return them to you. If you have memories, please write them down and send them to our email address: uvrs@stny.rr.com .

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'Buckwheat & Dandelion'...

Unadilla Valley Railroad Thrives On Twin Loyalty

by H. P. Draheim (from the January 18, 1953, issue of the *Utica Observer*). (Some pictures have been replaced with similar pictures of higher quality) (original) Photos by Dante O. Traquille.

The Unadilla Valley Railroad, one of the shortest of the "short lines" in the nation, this year will mark its 60th anniversary of service to the more than 15,000 farmers and villagers residing in the beautiful and picturesque Unadilla Valley.

The "Buckwheat and Dandelion" as it is sometimes called is like some other 500 short lines in the nation in that it doesn't haul great long strings of pay-freight but the owners are finding good soil around the real grass roots of American railroading.

To get the story of the "UV" we went to Roy Reidenbach, the line's general superintendent—and then to the scene of operations. One fact that stands out is LOYALTY in capital letters. Loyalty is demonstrated everywhere. First by the more than 40 employees who flatly assert "The UV is part of us," and then the many merchants, dealers, factories, and others who prefer using the railroad to other forms of transportation.

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THE UNADILLA VALLEY RAILROAD, sometimes fondly referred to as "The Buckwheat and Dandelion" or just "B & D," like more than 500 other "short lines," doesn't haul much freight, but its owners are finding good soil around the grass roots of American Railroading. Sixty years old this year, the line embraces 49 miles of single track and connects Bgewater with New Berlin Junction.



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IN FACT, the railroad has become rooted deeply in each of the communities it serves. The line policy, "You have got to serve the public pretty good nowadays," really is paying off.

Service to the public has included the loan of a load of ties for cribbing when a local poultryman wanted to enlarge his hen-house, patronizing gasoline dealers who rely on the UV for shipments of gasoline, donations of that and lumber when a church had to be relocated, making purchases from a car dealer whose new cars came by rail, and doing business with merchants whose merchandise comes in box cars. All its employees, to a man, point out "They help us so it is no more than right that we should help them."

While most railroads in the country are cutting off, or abandoning branch lines, the Unadilla Valley Railroad has been adding trackage. The original 20-mile, single track line from New Berlin to Bridgewater, now includes an eight-mile branch to Edmeston and a 21-mile branch to New Berlin Junction.

The most northerly terminal is in Bridgewater where connections are made with the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western. The southerly terminal is at New Berlin Junction, where there is a tie-in with the New York, Ontario & Western.

The diesel-powered UV freight makes one round trip a day, starting at New Berlin at 7:30 a. m. and reaching Bridgewater one hour later. The cars are exchanged with the DL&W and about 9:00 a. m. the UV freight



GENERAL MANAGER is Roy Reidenbach, who has served since 1937.



ENGINEER is Bruce Harshbarger, who can throttle steam as well as Diesel engines.

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comprising about 12 cars proceeds southward, returning to New Berlin at 10.

The next operation is over the Edmeston branch, with arrival there at 11. Back at New Berlin by noon, the crew takes time out for lunch and then the train heads for New Berlin Junction in time to make connections with an O&W train. Again the exchange of cars, and once again the UV heads back and is in New Berlin by 4 p. m.

This is the seven-day operation over the line. The payload comprises feed, grain, general merchandise and agricultural machinery.

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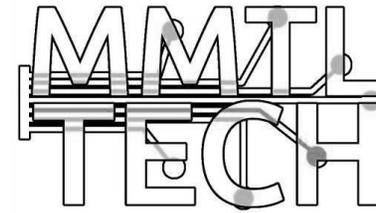
THE EDMESTON AND NEW BERLIN JUNCTION (East Guilford) branches were acquired by the UV in 1941 from the O&W. The responsibility of keeping that 29 miles of track in repair is that of George Moore, who during the days of the steam locomotive, fired the iron horses. Speaking of the steam locomotives, the UV still owns two of them, No. 6 and No. 7, both of the Prairie type. They are kept in the engine house at New Berlin and are used only in times of emergency.

When they are pressed into service, Moore proves he has not lost the art of keeping up steam. With the Unadilla Valley in the grip of Winter, the steamers are used for snow plow service. The company owns two plows, both acquired from other railroads.

The only other rolling stock is the Diesel acquired in 1947, a couple of work train cars, and two cabooses. Incidentally, the locomotives were



OLD FAITHFUL NUMBER 7 is one of the two Prairie Type steam locomotives still owned by the tiny railroad. Sheltered in the engine house at New Berlin, they are pressed into service during busy seasons, emergencies and for snow removal work.



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purchased back in 1914, one from a short line in Florida, and the other from the O&W. Steamers Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 all were scrapped by the UV.

As for the two four-wheeled cabooses, one was bought from the Jamestown, Westfield and Northwestern Railroad, and the other from the O&W. The line once provided passenger service, two round trips a day. This service was discontinued in 1929, and the coaches, after standing on a siding for many years, finally were scrapped.

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**THE STORY OF THE UV** gets its start in 1885 when some rails were laid in the southern part of New Berlin. Col. N. N. Pierce of Bridgewater got Thomas W. Spencer of Utica to survey the proposed line and to submit as an estimate of cost. The project was undertaken with the idea that the DL&W would build and operate. The plan fell through.

Two years later the Unadilla Valley Railroad club was formed at West Edmeston, with Hollum Langworthy as president and H. D. Babcock, Leonardsville, as treasurer. Meetings were conducted and between \$40,000 and \$50,000 was subscribed. Again the plan failed to materialize.

In 1892, F. F. Culver said he would build if the people would give the right of way. This was done and immediately \$33,000 was subscribed. The railroad was to have been completed by April, 1893, but progress was slow. During 1893 the railroad was complete to Leonardsville and on Christmas Day there was an excursion train from Utica. In 1894 the



**HEADQUARTERS** for the Unadilla Valley Railroad is a two-story frame building, once a black-smith shop.

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track was extended to South Edmeston and on July 27, 1895, the line from Bridgewater was completed with a ceremony which included the driving of a silver spike at New Berlin.

The feature of the celebration was speeches which addressed the fact that it no longer was necessary to travel 100 miles to reach Utica and the New York Central main line which was only 33 miles away. The speakers included Congressman James S. Sherman, later vice president and Mayor Gibson of Utica.

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**THE UNADILLA VALLEY RAILROAD** is a standard gauge single track line which follows a course along the eastern rim of Chenango



**CHIEF DISPATCHER** at the important New Berlin terminal is Paul Stillman who worked his way up from agent.



**ANOTHER RELIC** is this combination caboose and express car being loaded by Agent Van Fleet who is in charge of the Mt. Upton office.

and Madison Counties. The single track winds its way through the fertile heart of the Unadilla Valley. It crosses Route 8 five times. In addition, the steel ribbons pass over 34 farm crossings.

The UV is a grass-root road. It has no new stations, no automatic block signals, no streamlined trains. The old passenger station at Sweet's Crossing has been boarded up. The only markers along the pike are whistle boards and snow boards, announcing a switch or crossing where the plow must raise its flanger.



**MIXED FREIGHT, MILK AND COAL** comprise the pay loads for the single Unadilla Valley's freight as it works its way daily for one complete trip over every foot of track and thus provides a valuable tributary to the DL&W at Bridgewater and the NY O&W at Mt. Upton. The Diesel Locomotive, which replaced the iron house, is serving the Dairymen's League plant at Mt. Upton.

The familiar cross-bars mark all highway crossings except two, those at Grecian Bend and South New Berlin, where a flash signal and a wig-wag have been installed, respectively.

The right of way is a narrow strip about 35 feet wide. The fence bounding it is none too secure and frequently during the Summer months, the train crew first must shoo a cow or two from the track before proceeding.

During Winter there are times when snow banks are head-high and more than once a train crew has spent the night on the rails. Paul Stillman, now dispatcher at New Berlin Junction, recalls when he left Leonardsville on a Tuesday noon, and arrived at New Berlin, 15 miles away, Thursday night.

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**THE UV IS AN INTEGRAL PART** in the lives of the farmers and villagers in the area. During the course of a year, it brings many thousands of tons of coal from Pennsylvania mines. At one time it transported thousands of head of livestock.

The line starts several hundred carloads each year of manufactured goods made in the Unadilla Valley's communities. Among the top ship-



**ALL SET FOR WINTER** is this sharp bladed snow plow which will keep the single track open and traffic moving, despite drifts which sometimes range from six to seven feet in depth.

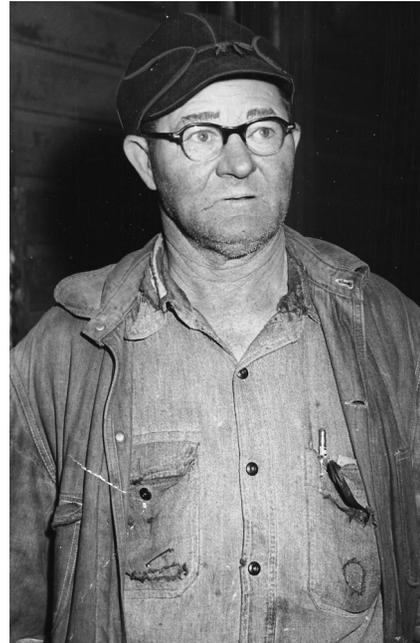
pers are the Babcock-Eureka farm implement company in Leonardsville, the Flint Motor Sales, Charles Mitchell, Floyd Wilbur, the Kraft-Phoenix Company which makes Philadelphia Brand Cream Cheese, and many others.

Engineer of the road is Bruce Harshbarger who succeeded Fred Clark, now retired. With the changeover to Diesel power, Moore was promoted from fireman to section foreman. The conductor is Howard Caldwell who served the line many years as brakeman. The present brakeman is John Hoxie.

The line has one woman serving as station agent, Mrs. Ralph Gustin at Leonardsville. She succeeded Stillman when he was promoted to dispatcher. Joseph Graham is shop foreman and C. E. Harris is superintendent of Diesel power. Howard Conley, another veteran UV station agent, now serves the DL&W at Utica.

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**IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTE** that during the depression years the UV enjoyed a 25 per cent increase in revenue. The history of the railroad, however, shows that right from the start the UV seemed to share the prejudices of the valley people. Until 1938 the DL&W was favored for connections, although the O&W was 50 miles closer to New York. The



**FOREMAN** of section crew is George Moore, who can fire No. 6 if necessary.



**ONLY WOMAN** employed by UV as station agent, is Mrs. Ralph Gustin.

O&W was counted a strictly competitive line,

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**THE FIRST LOCOMOTIVES** were the “Merlyn” and the “Pendragon.” These engines received more publicity than the president of the railroad, Frederick De Coppet, whose only mention was: “He has been in Europe for some time.”

All has not been smooth sailing for the UV. Back in 1904 the line went into receivership. Eight miles away in Butternut Valley lived a retired doctor, Lewis R. Morris. His wife was the daughter of Montana’s rich senator, William Andrews Clark.

Dr. Morris was not particularly a railroad fan, but his father-in-law was, and so Dr. Morris bought the railroad and owned it until his death. The senator used to ride over the railroad in his private car. The doctor’s investment proved excellent. He also received \$15,000 annually from his stock.

When passenger service started falling off in 1924, Dr. Morris purchased a gasoline-powered combination baggage and passenger unit. It was an unlucky move for less than a month after its inaugural run, the car crashed into a northbound freight and two persons were killed.

Passenger service finally was discontinued in 1929. Dr. Morris died in 1936 and the UV was sold to a junk dealing firm in New York.



**JACK OF ALL TRADES** is Joseph Graham, shop foreman, who keeps equipment in repair.



**SOLE BRAKEMAN** on the line is John Hoxie, preparing to couple a milk car at Mt. Upton.

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**IT TURNED OUT**, however, that the H. F. Salsberg Company didn’t plan to junk the railroad after all. Although the firm bought and dismantled many other short lines, including the Niagara Gorge Railroad, trolley lines on Long Island and the Sandy River and Rangeley Lakes Railroad in Maine, it saw possibilities in the UV.

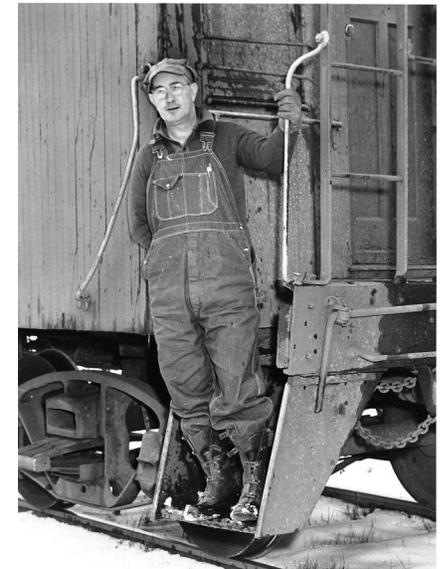
Salsberg became the president and in 1937 the railroad showed a net loss of \$19,000 which included \$17,000 paid in interest. Of this amount \$9,000 represented interest on a gravel pit purchased some years previous by Dr. Morris.

The First move for Salsberg was to pay the Morris estate at least \$75,000 for the railroad. The deal did not include the gravel pit which was “the anchor around the line’s neck.” Thus the railroad got rid of more than half of its fixed charges. In 1938 the railroad earned \$3,400 from operations and \$2,800 from rentals. Under the reorganization, Reidenbach was made general manager. He has served since and the railroad continues to pay its way.

[Editor’s note: I have found a number of very minor errors in fact in this story. See how many you can locate and let us know by email].



**POT BELLIED STOVES** like this one are found in stations along the 49-mile line, and between trains agents like Van Fleet at Mt. Upton are up to provide warmth for the crews during Winter months.



**CONDUCTOR** for many years is Howard Caldwell.

## The UV Store

**The Life and Times of a Small Railroad**, by William S. Young, 2009, 120 pages. A definitive account of the UV Railway. \$30.

**Index to Fred Pugh's "Days Along the Buckwheat & Dandelion"**, by Lee Stone. 11 pages, hundreds of entries. \$6, free shipping.

**The Story of the Unadilla Valley Railroad as Told in Newspaper Articles**, by Tom DeForest, 2016. 330 articles from over 50 newspapers. 105 pages, includes a 9-page index. \$25.

**Topographic Maps of the UV**, 29 pages of maps of the whole UV system in full color with a binder, \$20.

**Cat's Meow** figure of the UV #200 locomotive. Wood, 7" wide, 3.5" high, brand new, \$20. (NOTE: this is not related to the Cat's Meow store in Sherburne NY).

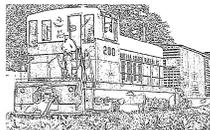
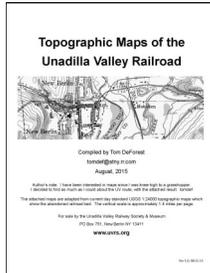
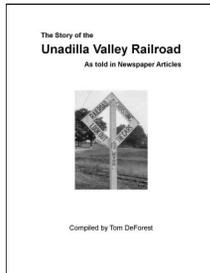
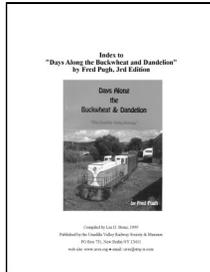
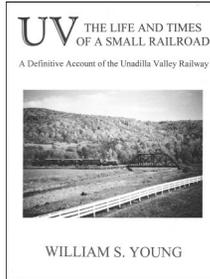
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**We have a number of articles and reprints for sale.** Most are \$3 each. Check our web site: [www.uvrs.org](http://www.uvrs.org).

**Questions? Call Sandy Kilmer, UV Storekeeper, at 607-548-7007.**



## Unadilla Valley Railway Society & Museum Membership Form

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### Membership Categories:

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A list of member names and categories will be published annually. If you would prefer **not** to be included, please check here:

Dues for new members who join after July 1st cover all of the following calendar year.

Dues are payable on January 1st of each year. Keep your membership up to date to receive copies of our Pendragon newsletter and invitations to all of our meetings and special events.

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**The Pendragon** is the official publication of the Unadilla Valley Railway Society and Museum. This newsletter is published quarterly by and for the membership. Correspondence on regional railroad history is welcomed. Articles will be considered for future publication in these pages. If you have received this newsletter as a courtesy, please consider joining. Inquiries should be sent to the UVRS&M, PO Box 751, New Berlin NY 13411 or by e-mail to [UVRS@stny.rr.com](mailto:UVRS@stny.rr.com).

The Unadilla Valley Railway Society & Museum was founded in 1995 with headquarters in New Berlin, New York. Since 1995 the organization has held a provisional charter under the New York State Education Department. The Society is a non-profit organization under 501(c)(3) of the United States Internal Revenue Code. Contributions of funds and items, as well as volunteer mileage, may be deductible on your income tax depending on your tax situation.

The Unadilla Valley Railway Society and Museum depends on your support as members, contributors and helpers in other ways. We very much appreciate all of your contributions.

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