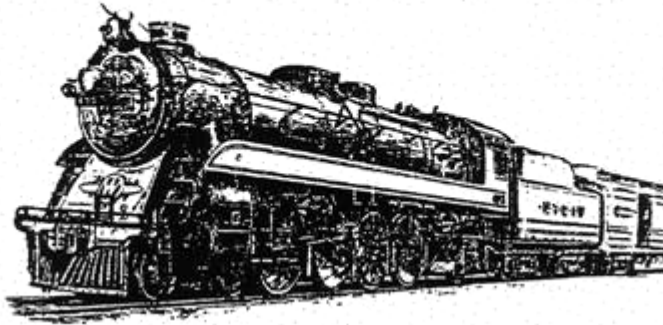


THE MOUNTAINEER



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With the Summer of 2009 now a recent memory, it's time for me to get back into the groove - or in this case, back on track. I hope you all had a fantastic summer. Although the weather could have been better here in the Northeast, I can say my summer was interesting, eventful and enjoyable.

Once again, Middletown Railroad Day in July was a great success. Webmaster Ron Vassallo and Vice-President Al Seebach did a fine job in running it. Local railroad history awareness is the purpose of this event, and our Society authors, modelers and presenters put on some fantastic displays and programs. Despite the prediction of rainy weather, many people attended, and a few even joined our ranks.

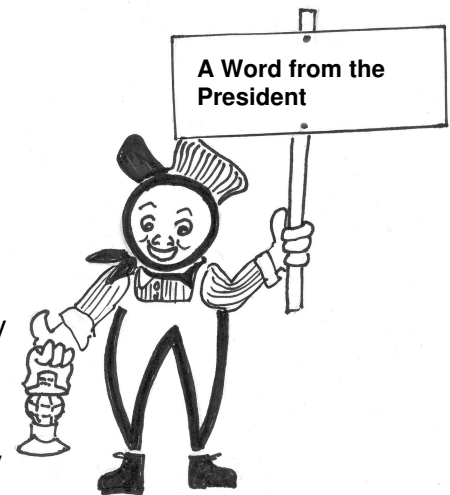
We are on the threshold of a new frontier. At the direction of the Board of Trustees, the Society has invested in some hi-tech scanning, imaging and printing equipment that will help digitize many critical documents in our archives. This is a huge step in the right

direction for us, and it was spearheaded by longtime member and archivist Jeff Otto. Jeff has been working many volunteer hours each day on this project, and after a demonstration he gave, the equipment is most definitely state-of-the art. At the conclusion of this demonstration, it became evident to me that this area of the Archives is now "Otto-ized", to coin a phrase used by member Carl Ohlson. Or, as Jeff likes to put it, "Otto-mated". As the project of digitizing the archives appears to be at least a two man project, Jeff is looking for someone to volunteer as an assistant. Some very basic and simple computer skills are required.

I trust you have enjoyed reading this year's Observer issue, *A Ride Through the Countryside on the Syracuse & Chenango Valley Railroad*, written by John Taibi and Jim Georges. Again, for the modest cost of membership, you have received another high quality publication created by our dedicated and talented members. Shortly, you will also receive yet another high quality publication. Under the direction of Carl Ohlson, whose Publication Committee continues to pour out magnificent publications in a timely manner, the 2010 calendar, created by member Bill Schneider, will soon be on its way to you. After reviewing the proof during its September meeting unveiling, I can truly say that it will rank among the very best ever made. Simply gorgeous! I'm sure you will be pleased with it. Speaking of membership, as of the September meeting, we reached a total of 693 members. We continue to hold our own around the 700 number, and I thank you for your continued support.

Congratulations to webmaster Ron Vassallo. Our web site recently reached the plateau of 200,000 hits. This is true evidence as to the popularity of our web site, and the quality of the contents within. All who contribute should be proud of it.

Our Sales team of Arthur Robb and Walter Kierzkowski continue to generate much needed and welcomed revenue for the Society via the presence of the sales table at various events, and the mail order service. Their continued efforts and work are to be commended.



Plans for our Annual Convention are in the works, and the theme this year will be the Northern Division. If you can, try make plans to attend. Year after year, this event is well attended and well received. Most importantly, it gives all members a chance to meet fellow members, as well as the Officers and Trustees of the Society. Year after year, it is met with great success, and everyone has a wonderful time. Perhaps I will see you there.

In closing, I am always grateful for the work our volunteer members do on a daily basis. Although I try to remember to say it, I may not do so often enough. So, to all those members (you know who you are) who give your time and talent continually, I say - "Thank you."

George S. Shammas

The West Shore Side of the Story

Jerry Clearwater

I read with interest Mal Hauck's "O&W Ramblings" in the May issue, especially the part about the milk trains. I am a fan of milk trains and the associated industry, in addition to being obsessed with anything West Shore related. I think it all goes back to growing up in Bergenfield, NJ and seeing and hearing the West Shore trains on a daily basis.

As Mal indicated, the O&W ran their milk trains into the West Shore's Weehawken terminal. Both railroads shared the milk facilities, which at one time, consisted of five unloading platforms with a capacity of 46 cars. In 1915 the West Shore used one of the platforms, with the remaining four used by the O&W. The average train sizes ranged from nine to fourteen cars, depending on the season.

Using Mal's 1932 point in time, the West Shore carded one pair of milk trains on the River Division, Nos. 27 and 28. These two trains ran between Kingston and Weehawken. Eastbound (south by compass) No. 28 carried cars from the Wallkill Valley branch train No. 505 which left Montgomery at 2:55 pm and arrived in Kingston at 4:25 pm.

No. 28 also received cars from the Ulster and Delaware, which had become the Catskill Mountain branch after the New York Central bought the U&D in February 1932. Under the NYC control, the CM branch trains that handled the milk business were Nos. 509 and 528. Going east, No. 528 left Oneonta at 10:40 am and traveled the full 104 miles to Kingston, picking up cars along the way at stations such as Hobart, Stamford, Grand Gorge and Roxbury. No. 528 was scheduled into Kingston at 4:55 pm. Things must have been hectic to get No. 28 together, especially if any of the connections were late!

Using a June 26, 1932 River Division employee timetable, things began to get busy down at Weehawken during the evening. NYO&W No. 12 came in at 7:42 pm, closely followed by NYC No. 28 at 7:50 pm. NYO&W No. 10 was the last scheduled train into Weehawken and rolled in at 11:15. This later arrival gave the boys some time to unload the first two trains and get the milk trucks and wagons on the ferry to 42nd St. Almost all of the milk was processed in "city plants" located in Manhattan and Brooklyn, although there were a few on the Jersey side, such as Hohneker's Dairy in North Bergen.

The labor to handle the West Shore milk business in Weehawken consisted of 15 to 18 employees. Most men reported to work at 8:00 pm and worked through to 4:00 am. During the early part of the shift, the work consisted of unloading full cans from the cars and loading them into milk trucks and wagons. The same milk trucks and wagons had come over on the ferry earlier in the evening with the empty cans. These empties now needed to be loaded on the milk cars quickly so the westbound milk trains could be on their way during the early hours of the morning.

West Shore train No. 27 was the first out, due to leave Weehawken at 1:30 am.; arriving at Kingston by 4:35 am. NYO&W No. 11 was next, leaving at 2:00 am and reaching Cornwall and the O&W rails at 3:38 am. NYO&W No. 9 was the last to leave Weehawken at 4:30 am.; arriving at Cornwall, 52.27 miles up the line, at 6:10 am.

Empty cars were distributed by the Wallkill Valley and Catskill Mountain branch trains No. 508 and 509 respectively. Most of these milk trains operated on a daily basis, although there might be some adjustment to times on Sundays. Dairy cows did not work a six-day schedule!

The West Shore line west of Albany also had milk trains running on it, but these were consolidated with NYC mainline trains and run down the NYC's line on the east side of the Hudson. These milk trains terminated at several points in Manhattan, at 130th St and 33rd St. The West Shore even shipped milk to New York City from as far away as Earlville (although much of the Chenango branch business went to Syracuse or via the O&W)! Hopefully I have helped your understanding of this once profitable and interesting line of business.

O & W Ramblings No. 6: The Tale of the Tape - the O&W "Lost Tapes"

Mal Houck

While the summertime is often by many not considered to be "Modeling Season" as outdoor and other leisure activities take folks out of and away from workshop efforts, I always have enough projects under way at any one time so that I indeed spend shop time with regularity year round. As "shop time" I include not only model building but also the writing(s) and preparation of columns for the OWRHS Website, diorama building (in the old barn shop), as well as model building.

When I'm at work in the basement model shop I often have either a radio or CD player on in the background, and that ("ramble" of its own) brings me to another "O&W Ramble" topic here. One of the regular "plays" on my CD player is any one of the OWRHS "Lost Tapes." In prior editions of this column I've made references to remarks made and recorded on the "Lost Tapes," so to define further I'll speak to that superb source.

For those not familiar the "Lost Tapes" are a series of four CDs made from some old reel-to-reel tape recordings made by old O&W employees back in October of 1962. While these chaps were not what we would call youthful (some with more than fifty years' employment on the O&W!) and then with speaker Homer House having worked for 65 years - not just having retired at age 65 - the minds and recollections were sharp. To listen to these tapes (and again, again and again as I have) is to learn, experience [vicariously] and understand the texture and times of the O&W. For an understanding of the O&W one must keep in mind that it has now been gone for over a half century. To some degree, our modern experiences(s) are disconnected from those of the "old heads" of the O&W, making their reminiscences all the more valuable.

What occurred in the creation of the "Lost Tapes" was that one of the O&W retirees invited his former working colleagues to a camp up near Hancock with the intention to record these very recollections. These folks knew exactly what they were doing. . . since one of the earlier statements stated a purpose of ". . . telling what the O&W was. . ." and then further that it ". . . was important, 'cause that was what the D&H [Canal] people had done. . ." Here, it's easy to see that these old railroad men were making, and knew they were making a record for posterity.

However it came to be, these tape recordings were among the materials recovered through the efforts of member Al Seebach and others in obtaining that "mother lode" of archival materials from Cornell University. With the overwhelming quantity of materials to be sorted, cataloged and inventoried these old tape recordings were filed away and then unseen for a dozen years or more - hence the moniker "Lost." When rediscovered by Ron, Al and the Archives folks they were put to CD and made available as a Sales Table item.

What are they, and what's on them? Well, the tapes are unscripted "ramblings" which stand alone in describing the tenor and texture of the times and era when the O&W was, as one of the participants said "...the tops..." The "Lost Tapes" rambles cover the entire "Homer House" employment from his "day one" work as a water boy at Mayfield Yard in 1892 to the end of the O&W on March 29, 1957...absolutely remarkable! In some cuts questions are asked and answered, while in others the speakers just jump in with tales, yarns and anecdotes.

I've listened to these tapes time and again and have come to appreciate more not only the "Lost O&W" but the "Lost Times" of the past - so for here, I'll customize my own ramble upon the OWRHS "Lost Tapes" with my small historical editorial input and comment:

"Accidents" – Were a common occurrence in those early days of the "Railroad Age" and especially at unprotected rural grade crossings. In listening to the "Tapes" it came to my own realization that the speakers never talked of vehicles when mentioning accidentally hitting something on the tracks, but only of accidents involving animals and livestock! "Hit a cow..." or "hit a mule..." or "hit a team of horses..." Surely, in traversing a very rural and agricultural region the likelihood of running over livestock was greater than elsewhere, but so often forgotten is the fact that cars and trucks were a rarity in such places well into the 20th Century. Wagons, carts and even early farm implements were drawn by horse or mules. It could be too that the "Railroad Age" was young enough so that even the immediate railroad neighbors were not quite yet understanding of the dangers of rail and road crossings, nor aware of how much time or distance it took to stop a moving train!

"Derailments" Include not only the "photo-op" disasters, like the famous "Chocolate Wreck" of the end of the Leyland coal dock in Hamilton, the rollover of the Y-2 and passenger train near Burnside, the several accidents at Fishs Eddy which took out East Branch of Delaware River bridges, and on, but also the less tragic operational problems with engine pony trucks off the tracks, a car wheel down, or engine drivers on the ground where track structures were not seriously damaged. Little realized is that it was first and largely up to the train crew to get things back up on the rails and proceed with their appointed or scheduled duties. Whether it was that a car was over, or track torn up, or an engine off and crosswise – "catty-whompus" to the rails - then 'twas time to call in the wreck outfit. The lesser low speed wrinkles to operations called for the crew to get out the rerailer "frogs" which hung under the tender frames of steam engines (and even noticeably fitted and hung under the cabs of NW-2 diesels) and then try to get tracked again. Having once seen the operations in the D&H Colonies yard, I'll try to describe.

Every train had some blocking stowed either in the loco cab, the tender apron or in the caboose. The blocking consisted of hard wood wedges and short timbers intended to be placed to form a ramp over and onto which a derailed wheel could be pulled. The "frog" would be spiked to the outside of the ties ahead of the offending and grounded ("outside") wheel. Then, with the wedges and timbers in place, and running the engine (and cars in front, if they couldn't be switched off) with the brakes applied enough to make for some rolling resistance, the cut (or the engine alone) would be ever so slowly and carefully run ahead...ideally even to the point of the derailed wheel flange run up onto the top of the rail head. When the wheel came to the "frog" it (hopefully) would be forced by the shoulder of the back towards the center of the track...and then (also hopefully) with a resounding thunder the wheel would slip back to its proper place and be re-railed.

If this description clearly describes the operations of re-railing then it's easily seen that (1.) it only works on the car (or engine) wheel on the outside of one of the rails and that (2.) it's a one-wheel-at-a-time effort! Some trainmen were skilled at good at this sort of thing...one of the old "Lost Tapes" speakers talking of one co-worker who was "...a good wrecker..." Homer House spoke of a Bullmoose derailed while trying to make a "flying switch" to drop a tank car of gasoline in a siding at Hancock with a facing point switch "...and down she went..." The yarn isn't clear on whether or not the wreck outfit had ultimately to be called, but they all tried to re-rail the behemoth using steel switch plates they found at hand, all of which bent under the load of the 2-10-2...another good account and insight into the work of the iron men who tended the O&W iron horses!

So, that's it for this O&W Ramble, until the next edition of this Mountaineer Newsletter. Until next time I'll still be listening to the "Lost Tapes" and, while maybe not in the next column, but again in another I'll write of interesting tidbits I glean from them. To close, an editorial comment on the preservation of history is at hand; namely, the value of these old "oral history" accounts is simply invaluable. Unfortunately, the time is largely gone when the O&W can any longer be memorialized this way, since the former O&W employees are fewer by the day.... I surely would invite any old-timers to just ramble for some time into a tape recorder, or for anyone who knows of an old retiree "O&W-er" to ask for permission to talk someday, and then shine a microphone up to record what will soon be lost to time. For anyone interested, the "Lost Tapes" are definitely worth the time to listen. Until next time...

Orange County Times-Press, February 21, 1866: Midland Railway Route

Leaving you with a bit of nostalgia - thanks to Robert McCue for scrounging this up!

It may be considered certain that the proposed railroad from Oswego to New York, through the central counties of this state, will be built as soon as the work can be accomplished. Judge Low is urging the passage of a bill through the Legislature to facilitate it's construction. Among it's provisions is one allowing the property along the line to be taxed for that purpose, by the issue of town bonds, it is further provided that a majority of the capital of a town may defeat subscriptions for the road. Another provision is that real and personal property of the road shall be exempt from taxation until one track is laid, not to exceed a period of ten years. The bill will undoubtedly be passed, as it is similar to one passed last winter the construction of the Cherry Valley road.

Preliminary surveys are being made along the whole line of the route, both by the Company and by others interested. The Engineer of the Eastern division, recently appointed, is William F. Grant, son of the late Amos Y. Grant, of Neversink, Sullivan County. The appointment is a good one and well-received.

Several routes through Sullivan are talked of, though the one most likely to be decided upon is through Rockland, Neversink Falls and Mamakating. This is called the Sandburgh Route, and will pass through Hasbrouck, Woodburne, Fallsburgh, Sandburgh, Homowack, and Phillipsport. How to get over Shawangunk Mountain is the greatest obstacle. The most feasible method, doubtless, is to tunnel it. For that purpose, nature has provided a way of overcoming any serious difficulty. At Roosa's Pass or Gap, between Phillipsport and the old lead mine, there is a partial break in the mountain, where it could be tunneled easier than any other route.

The height of the mountain at this point is 570 feet. From the top to the point proposed for commencing the tunnel is 300 feet, leaving 270 feet from the base to the same point. The canal and valley at Phillipsport can be crossed from 50 to 100 feet above the base of the mountain at the Gap, leaving only 220 feet to be overcome in the distance from Phillipsport to the locality for commencing the tunnel. This distance is just three and a half miles, or sixty-three feet to the mile. The tunnel will only be 2,625 feet, or one half mile long. The rock to be excavated is slaty and shelly, the same as is found at the top of the mountain, at the crossing at Wurzburg.

After gaining the east side of the mountain, the way is clear over the stable land above Bloomingburgh, passing near that village, and from thence by a perfectly feasible route to Middletown on the Erie road.

The people of Phillipsport have already taken measures to bring about the selection of this route -having by preliminary survey ascertained the facts above given-Would it not be well for the people of Middletown also to take action in this matter? We have on previous occasions alluded to the importance of securing, by a connection with the Middletown Railway, the benefits to be derived from the trade with Sullivan; and now that so feasible and direct a route is proposed, with Middletown as its proper terminus, it behooves our people not to let the opportunity pass unimproved.

It will readily be seen that the selection of this route for the Midland Railway is of vast importance to the projected road to Unionville and Deckertown. Besides preferring Middletown over Goshen as their market town, the people of that section would far more readily decide to come here, could they be assured of this village being the terminus of the Midland Railway. The construction of the road to Deckertown, also, would be so much completed towards the building of the Midland Railway, should the Managers of that road continue it on to New York, instead of using the Erie Railway. In that event, the people of Deckertown and other villages in that vicinity would have far shorter and more direct route to New York than any other proposed.

We feel safe in saying to our people, then, that in the multiplicity of railroad projects now before them, there is none more urgently demanding their attention than this election of the route via Roosa's Gap for the Midland Railway. It would open up to us for all coming time the trade of a section of country that would prefer this as it's market town-a trade that will be increased an hundred fold as soon as the road is built-besides making Middletown a railroad centre, doubling it's population in less than ten years, and adding increased value to real estates as well as increased profit to every branch of business among us. Indeed, we feel assured in saying, therefore, that were our people to furnish the means to build road to Roosa's Gap themselves, it would be to their interest to do so. At any rate, we ought not, by inaction or delay, let the golden opportunity pass of making our village the largest and most thriving inland place in Eastern New York.

Major archives project gearing up – Jeff Otto

We have begun a major scanning project to protect our archived information and to streamline research. The first part of the project involves large documents and maps (about 7,000 total), and we just purchased a system to scan them and to print copies as needed from the scans. The scan files we generate will be saved on DVDs and other media, and copies stored off-site to preserve the information in case of fire or other disaster at the archives. Of course a set of scans will be kept at the archives for viewing and printing, which will eliminate the need to continually handle the originals as we do now. As we scan the documents, we'll accumulate detailed information about them in Excel spreadsheets, so desired scans can be easily found using computer search tools. Eventually that information will be migrated to a database, which will make finding specific scans even easier.

This part of the project has several additional benefits. Taking better care of our documents by backing them up and handling them very little will encourage donations of additional documents. Our scanning capability will encourage loans of documents for us to scan and then return the originals to the owners. Printing copies will be much faster and easier, which will allow us to publish lists of the drawings to greatly increase mail-order sales. We'll finally be able to make copies of blueprints by "reversing" them so they print as black lines on white background, and we'll be able to print copies at different magnifications. Although the new equipment had to be shoe-horned into the already cramped archives, once the scanning is complete we will actually save space by eliminating the present area dedicated to sorting through boxes of large drawings and disassembling and reassembling sets of val maps.

We're starting with the large documents as they give the most "bang for the buck" (and for the time and effort), but will expand the project to include printed photos, photo negatives, slides, and smaller documents (authorizations for expenditures, lists of bridges, culverts and crossings, freight schedule charts, minutes books, etc). Additional equipment will be needed to efficiently scan the photos and smaller documents, and to browse, search, and view selected scans.

The project is massive. We need your help to prepare documents for scanning, scan them, check the scan quality, type descriptive information into the spreadsheet, mark which documents were scanned, and return the documents to storage. Please email me at jeffotto@aol.com to coordinate the work. It will take quite a while to complete, but will transform the operation of the archives, and be well worth the effort.

PS -- We already have two examples of additional project benefits. Kevin Cunningham is lending us 28 pages of West Shore RR station plans to scan, and Dan Myers is lending us a blueprint of the updated val map that shows the creosote plant just North of Livingston Manor.

A word from the editor

J.R. Myers

So it's been a while since our last issue, as you may have noticed. I've been dealing with those infamous "technical difficulties" - and getting used to a college schedule having been out of school for two years - but now that everything's settled in and technology has decided to cooperate once more, I've managed another issue of the Mountaineer thanks to a few individuals sending me more articles. This one's a bit sparse, so please, keep them coming! Email me at MountaineerEditor@gmail.com with anything from suggestions and critiques to articles, updates, and events notices (or tell me how your cat fared as you read this in the waiting room of your trip to the vet).

Calendar

Saturday & Sunday October 31 and November 1 Greenberg's Train Show at the Orange County Fair Grounds. O&WRHS Sales table will be present.

Friday November 13, M&NJRHS meeting 7:30 at the First Presbyterian Church on Roberts St.

Saturday, November 14, O&WRHS Annual Convention on The Northern Division

Sunday November 15, Poughkeepsie Railroad Show O&WRHS Sales table will be present.

Friday December 5, Membership Meeting Program Movies taken by Joyce Diane Sternitzke

Sunday December 6, Albany Train Show 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m., Empire State Plaza Convention Center, Albany just off I-87. Tickets are \$5.00 for adults, children under age 12 free when accompanied by an adult. For more information contact Great Train Extravaganza P.O. Box 544 Clifton Park, NY 12065 (514)-371-9164

Friday January 8, 2010, Membership Meeting O&W in Sullivan County program by Doug Barberio

Friday February 5, 2010, Membership Meeting program John Treen's NYS&W by Doug Barberio

NOTE: All dates and times are subject to change. Please refer to the website and our Yahoo Discussion Group as the event draws closer to verify the schedule for updated information.