

THE RAILYARD DISPATCH

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE DANBURY RAILWAY MUSEUM
SUMMER 2020



A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

STAN MADYDA

Back in March, everyone associated with the Museum was looking forward to the Spring and Summer. We were about to start our event season with the Easter Bunny Trains, restoration projects, members were taking the various safety tests and we had a number of reservations for Hands on the Throttle.

The road to re-opening the Museum is told in the article by Steve Gould. During the closure, there was some work still going on at the Museum. Progress has been made on the Mill Plain Station. Along with work done by our contractor, Museum members Jeff Van Wagenen, Patty Osmer, Don Konen, Jose Alves, Jim Teer, John Barton, Philip Beard, Bill Wagner, Alan Gruber Tom McCullough and Orion Newall-Vuillemont have been getting together to scrape and paint the rafters, brackets and beams. All of this is in preparation of the for the installation of the canopy. There is more work to be done and if you are interested, please contact Jeff at j.vanwagenen@danburyrail.org. In August, we had a representative from the CT State Preservation Commission visit to see if the station would qualify for landmark status and inclusion on any state or federal register. Unfortunately, there were several factors working against the station that would have made getting recognized difficult.

In the yard, work on projects has not been as active as they would have been if the pandemic didn't hit. There has been some work done on the turntable. Doing this project correctly has taken more time than we originally thought but progress is being made. Sami El-Abid will be able to resume his Eagle Scout project of restoring the Rutland Flat Car X-578. He had to suspend his work due to Covid, but has now successfully raised the \$5,000 for the restoration. Art Slothower with assistance from Justin Chapin and Philip Beard have been working on Reading coach 1547. Art has repainted in the two-tone green Reading scheme and added a new diaphragm. Justin and Philip painted the roof. Some less involved tasks have been completed on the New York Central cabooses, the New Haven cabooses and the 1455.

With our limited hours and prospects not looking good for the resumption of full operations before the end of the year, we have had to dip into our reserve funds to help pay bills. Some monthly expenses do not go away when we are closed. We have the money to see us through the pandemic but our reserves will have to be built back up and that could take several years.

Monetary donations to the Museum are always welcome and we will have some information on Legacy Giving in the next newsletter.

**AU RAILFAN CREW IS GROUNDED IN 2020
By Steve Gould**

The AU Railfan Team consists of three 1961 graduates of American University in Washington, DC. Two of them (Bob Kessler and Steve Gould) are also DRM members; the third is Paul Waugaman. They all live in different parts of the country: Steve in Connecticut, Bob in Virginia, and Paul in Arizona. Yet, since 2010, they have never failed to get together someplace in the US (or in the UK, for that matter) to chase, ride, and photograph trains. That is, until 2020! They had a trip planned to Chattanooga, TN, Kentucky, and Northern Georgia for late April and early May concentrating on the famed Norfolk Southern "Rathole". Alas, in late March and early April, things were heating up with COVID-19 and their three home states all had "Stay at Home" orders in place; as a result their trip was canceled. They thought that they might delay it until October but decided that is no longer realistic; they will wait until next year.

Their last trip was one year ago in late August and early September 2019 where they concentrated their coverage on five of the six New England states. Called "Summer Sojourn: Yankee Rails", they caught trains on the New England Central, Pan Am Southern, Vermont Railway, Amtrak 's Vermonter and Ethan Allen. They caught the Climax at Hobo Railroad and the one steam trip on the Mt. Washington Cog Railway. They participated in the Conway Scenic's Railfan Weekend where they ran into DRM Director Orion Newell-Vuillemont in Bartlett, NH. They finished up with a visit to the Maine Narrow Gauge Museum, Seashore Trolley Museum, Amtrak Downeaster, and MBTA "T" trains. The entire trip has been captured on a DVD of selected stills and video. The pandemic canceled one other event: Steve had planned a showing of the DVD at a Wednesday night session at the Museum on May 13.

The formation of the AU Railfan Crew was covered in the October 2013 issue of The Rail Yard Local. The three guys have been railfanning together since 2000, when there was a fourth member of their group; and Bob and Steve have chased trains off and on since 1957, when they first met each other at AU. Their major claim to fame was, while in college, was riding the last northbound run of the B&O's famous Royal Blue. Bob has made a number of DRM Wednesday night slide presentations on his many railfan exploits.

HOTT PROGRAM CONTINUES SAFELY

Tom McCullough

The DRM's Hands on the Throttle (HOTT) program continues to operate on a sporadic basis



while observing all required and COVID-19 virus protocols. During August we enjoyed training two gentlemen who had a great time learning about railroading rules, how to safely operate our RS-1 locomotive, climbing on freight cars to release handbrakes and building a freight train with those cars, then hauling their train in the railyard. In fact, both participants had such a great time they both want to come back and learn to operate our GE 44-Tonner locomotive also!

Although we're maintaining social distancing as much as possible, disinfecting all relevant surfaces in and on the locomotive prior to the session, and requiring masks or face coverings at all times, obviously not all prospective participants are yet comfortable with their involvement at this time; we are maintaining a list of folks who would like to schedule their session at a later date. We currently have a number of interested folks on our list for future sessions. We plan to continue to offer our Hands on the Throttle program on demand as long as the museum is open. Email the museum at info@danburyrail.org to be put in contact with our program coordinator. If you've got a railfan at least 18 years old in your family, this program will make a great gift; we do have gift certificates available.



Lewis Peterman in the RS-1

Pictures by Jeff Wagenen

THE PANDEMIC OF 2020 AND THE DANBURY RAILWAY MUSEUM

By Steve Gould

20 20: your eyesight? The ABC News program on Friday nights? No, the year! One that many of us will want to forget. The pandemic of COVID-19 has impacted the DRM as it has thousands of businesses and institutions all over the State of Connecticut and beyond.

So, when did things begin to change? Well, you have to go back to March 2020. Things were started to heat up in the Tri-State area of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut in the first two weeks of the month. On March 12 at 4 PM the Events Committee had scheduled a meeting. The first topic on the agenda was the Easter Bunny Trains that were coming up the first two weekends in April. The Committee voted unanimously to recommend to the Board that the event be canceled as COVID-19 cases were beginning to blossom. The group was optimistic that lost Bunny revenue could be made up on events later in the year including adding another weekend for Santa Trains. That evening, at 7 PM, the Restoration Committee met and, while updating current projects, they were fully aware that perhaps work would soon have to halt.

The Annual Meeting was scheduled on March 18 where the results of the 2020 election would be announced after ballot counting the night before. As the date grew closer, we soon realized that the meeting was in doubt. The State of Connecticut was starting to recommend actions to be taken by “non-essential” businesses and institutions so via an e-mail vote, the Board of Directors decided it was in the best interest to cancel not only the Annual Meeting and reschedule the March 19 Board meeting to March 26 as a telephone conference meeting. The Board also voted, “out of an abundance of caution” to close the Museum, effective March 17, and cancel the upcoming Easter Bunny trains. At the Board’s March 26 Board meeting, a vote was taken to remain closed until further notice. Our Treasurer, Patty Osmer, outlined that, should this closure last for the balance of the year, we would have an operating loss of around \$60,000! With that, we began a series of belt-tightening actions .

In early May, the State of Connecticut, following the guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), announced the first phase, Phase 1, of the re-opening of Connecticut which would begin on May 20. Sector rules for outdoor museums were released. At the same time, the Museum appointed a Re-Opening Task Force consisting of the Chairman, President , Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and three Directors, a total of eight people. In Phase 1, only outdoor museums were allowed to open; the Task Force decided that it would talk about re-opening when the entire Museum could re-open under Phase 2. Sector Rules for Phase 2 museum opening were announced on June 7 for a June 20 re-opening; this was later changed to June 17. The Task Force decided that the Museum would open July 4.

The Task Force met weekly and once the Phase 2 Sector Rules were announced, began work of what would have to be done both before opening and while the Museum was open to be in total compliance with the Sector Rules prescribed by the State of Connecticut.

A Health and Safety Plan was created. Risk mitigation, the major portion of the plan, covered the following topics:

- Density Management
- Physical Distancing
- Administrative Controls
- Cleaning and Cleaning Supplies
- Facility Air and Water Quality
- Space Management
- Training
- Medical Testing, Tracing, and Isolation
- Face Coverings and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- Personal Health Precautions.

A week prior to opening, a training seminar was held via phone conference to go over the new rules, forms, and cleaning protocols that would be involved. Plexiglas barriers were installed at the Front Desk and the Gift Shop.

It was decided by the Task Force to “walk before running” at first. There would be no Rail Yard Local; the children’s play area would be closed; and the Gift Shop would be closed. A maximum of four volunteers were required to staff the Museum; one at the Front Desk; one inside the station to handle the cleaning protocols and keep visitors moving; one at the Metro-North crossing gate; and one in the yard to answer questions. There would be no guided tours. Thus far, the open days have gone well and we have had a decent number of visitors. Many expressed that they were happy we were open and understood fully what we had to do to allow that to happen. And we were able to run “socially distanced” Hands on the Throttle sessions in August as well.

All is not rosy, however. During the week of August 17, the City of Danbury issued a COVID-19 alert due to an increase in COVID cases in the City which required non-essential operations, like us, to shut down once again.

Some work in the rail yard has continued, especially with the restoration of the Mill Plain Station. Volunteers are properly social distancing while working and a limited number of volunteers were used.

In any event, the Board and the volunteers can’t wait for the day that things return to “normal”, whatever normal will look like at that time.

Photos from the Westman Collection Stan Madyda

Not only was Vic Westman an historian, artist and train engineer, he took many photos of active and abandoned rail lines in the area. Some of his photos appear in two recent books on the Harlem Line and Central New England Railroad by John Ham. We have to inventory all that he left us, but there could be thousands of images.

On April 8, 1971, Vic ventured down to the New Canaan Branch to do some photography. For Vic, a train did not have to appear in the photo. He was interested in recording the right of way and the structures. Here are two photos of New Canaan, Talmadge Hill and Springdale.



DRM RECEIVES THREE GRANTS

By Steve Gould

The Danbury Railway Museum received a \$5,000 grant for restoration work on the Mill Plain station. A letter received by the Museum on June 9 states, "On behalf of the National Railway Historical Society and its Heritage Grants Committee, I am pleased to advise you that your organization has been awarded a Heritage Grant for 2020 in the amount of \$5,000 for the purpose of the restoration and construction of the canopy of the former Mill Plain railroad station." The letter was signed by Charles L. Webb, Chair of the NRHS Heritage Grants Committee.

The Museum received two smaller grants earlier in the year – a \$2,000 grant from the Ridgefield, CT Thrift Shop for the purchase of a flat-bed scanner for the Museum Library; and one for \$250 from the Women's Club of Danbury and New Fairfield (WCDNF) which also helps with the restoration of the Mill Plain station. Both grants were awarded in February.

The NRHS grant is the second major grant received by the Museum for the Mill Plain station. In August 2019, Don Konen, Patty Osmer and Steve Gould traveled to Palmer, MA to receive the Founder's Award grant of \$10,000 from the Amherst Railway Society for work on the Mill Plain station.

The NRHS and WCDNF grants will be used to offset part of the \$18,000 cost estimated for the total canopy restoration expense, which includes the cost for canopy brackets, rafters, hip rafters, fly beam, canopy roof boards and plywood which will be used over the canopy roof boards. It also includes labor expense to install all of the above by Salem Preservation, the contractor working on the building for us.

Test Your Knowledge: Railroad Quiz

In the May 1953 issue of "Railway Progress," there was a little quiz presented by Paul Norton on the use of certain letters used as abbreviations in the railroad industry. Match the word or phrase with the correct with the abbreviation. Some are easy and others take a little thought.

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---------|
| 1. Empty cars | a. T |
| 2. New Experimental Trains | b. OP |
| 3. Brotherhood | c. MTYs |
| 4. Car in bad order | d. I |
| 5. Track turnaround | e. X |
| 6. Switchback curve | f. B.O. |
| 7. Use of intoxicants forbidden | g. Y |
| 8. Bridge beam | h. B |
| 9. Rail | i. S |
| 10. Telegrapher | j. G |

Look for the answers somewhere in the newsletter.



Every Friday throughout the summer, the City of Danbury and the Danbury Railway Museum opened the parking lot for a Farmers' Market. Local farmers and vendors from nearby areas including Southbury and Brewster brought their goods to be sold. From vegetables and fruits to baked breads and pastries, the vendors offered a variety of fresh items some picked that morning. Parking for the handicapped and elderly was provided in the parking lot while other parking was available in nearby lots.

Covid-19 protocols were in place with masks and social distancing required and hand sanitizing stations available. Although the DRM was not open during this event, it did give our location and museum exposure for possible future visits.



New Haven Stations

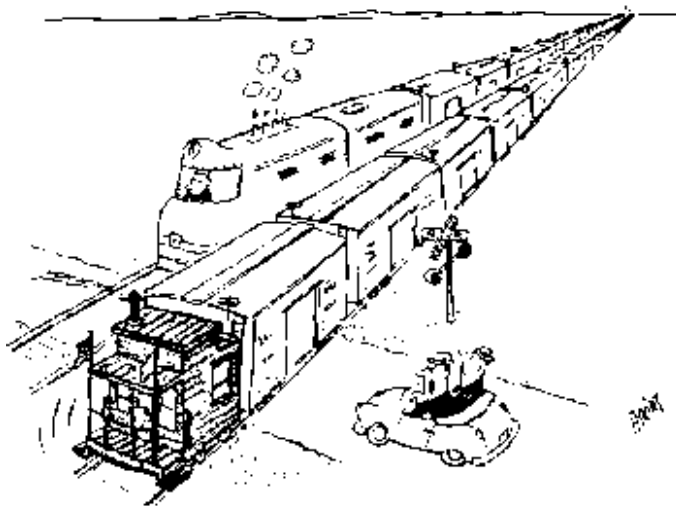
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O	O	M	N	E	W	T	O	W	N	R	W	I	T
M	D	T	D	A	N	B	U	R	Y	R	R	S	T
O	A	O	L	O	E	H	W	H	M	T	O	P	Y
C	P	Y	S	I	O	P	C	W	B	N	W	E	D
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A	W	A	T	E	R	B	U	R	Y	E	S	B	R
E	C	N	E	D	I	V	O	R	P	N	S	L	B

STAMFORD
 BETHEL
 NORWALK
 ROWAYTON
 HOLMES
 NEW HAVEN
 WATERBURY
 WILTON
 BOSTON
 NEWTOWN
 CANAAN
 MAYBROOK
 POUGHKEEPSIE
 WESTPORT
 DANBURY
 PELHAM
 PROVIDENCE
 KENT

Play this puzzle online at : <https://thewordsearch.com/puzzle/1396897/>

Answer to the matching quiz

1-C , 2-E, 3-H, 4-F, 5-G, 6-I, 7-J, 8-D, 9-A, 10-B



"Well, finally! I thought this thing would never end."