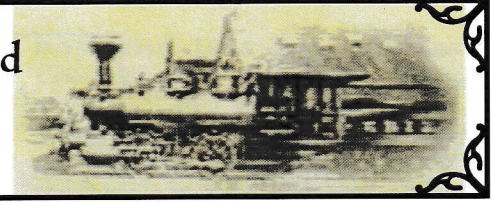


French Creek Valley Railroad Historical Society

P.O. Box 632 Meadville, PA 16335



FALL 2020 Newsletter of the French Creek Valley Railroad Historical Society Volume 15 Number 2

||||| VALLEY EXPRESS |||||

The Wreck of the Bessemer #67

The (Meadville) Evening Republican newspaper, predecessor of today's Meadville Tribune, covered a railroad accident in the city on Sunday, March 6, 1910. The wreck occurred at the Bessemer and Lake Erie bridge over French Creek. Pilings on the north side of the bridge, and on the east side of the creek were weakened by ice hammering the pilings as it passed under the railroad. The wreck involved a small train of 5 cars and a caboose, plus the locomotive and tender. Included in the consist was a derrick car that was to be used on that day's job. The job was to repair the structure before the bridge pilings became too unstable. The engine crew were Engineer George Washburn and Fireman Charlie Adams, both of Albion, PA. They were regular mainline crews that happened to pull this job using B&LE #67, a 2-6-0 built in 1898 by Brooks Locomotive Works (later a part of ALCO) for the Bessemer's predecessor, Pittsburgh Shenango & Lake Erie as #67. It then became Pittsburgh Bessemer & Lake Erie #67 in 1900 when the PS&LE reorganized. The locomotive, classed M3B by the railroad, had 20"x26" cylinders, 56" drivers, with a tractive effort of 28,414 pounds, and weighted 129.6 tons.

The crew wasn't familiar with the conditions on the spur, but were cautious enough to stall the engine before traversing the bridge. The crew backed up, took up the slack and forged ahead, which is when the bridge collapsed, taking the #67 and its crew for a dip in French Creek. The locomotive and tender rolled over onto its right side in seven feet of water. The opposite side of the locomotive was sticking out of the water, enabling Mr. Adams and Mr. Washburn to escape through the cab window. The cars trailing the tender stayed on the rails. The only injuries suffered was a sprained thumb by Engineer Washburn. The bridge lay in twelve feet of water.

It was stated in the Evening Republican that thousands of onlookers visited the wreck. So much so that a guard had to be stationed to keep people off of the remains of the bridge. *(continued on page 5)*



Meadville Evening Republican photo of B&LE #67 laying in French Creek after bridge collapsed. March 6, 1910



Tom Collard

One of our former members passed away. Thomas Albert Collard, age 77, passed away from Lewy Body Dementia on September 11, 2020.

Tom was a railroader, having worked for the Central Railroad of New Jersey, Conrail, Southern Railroad of New Jersey, Western New York & Pennsylvania, and then worked for a company in California that was railroad related.

He also owned and operated Tom's Train Shop that was located at the @ the Bank in Meadville, PA. Many of our members frequented his train shop on a regular basis, if not to purchase a product, then just to talk with Tom. Tom also was one of the comparatively few TT scale model railroaders, a scale that is between HO and N scales.

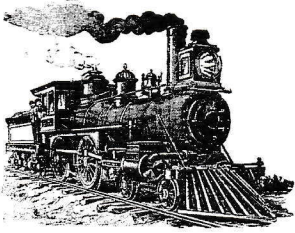
At the FCVRRHS membership meetings Tom always had a bad, but funny joke to tell. He also was an integral part of the FCVRRHS in earlier years and for the city of Meadville. He helped co-found the First Friday events in the city, that helped bring in shoppers to the city.

It was reported that Tom's illness started in April 2020. It is the same affliction that caused the passing of comedian Robin Williams and baseball hall of famer Tom Seaver.

Our thoughts and prayers to Tom's wife, Cynthia and their family. We miss you much, Tom.

Clear Track Ahead.

- Carl Timko



From the Stationmaster's Office

Fall is here and we hope everyone has had a safe summer. Since the CoVid-19 virus is still a force to be reckoned with, we are still maintaining social distancing and wearing masks. We hope a viable vaccine is found and implemented so we can all get back to our normal routines.

In the meantime, we have been steadily renovating the interior of the Meadville Railroad Depot. We have had the floors and walls spray-foamed, drywall installed, tile installed in the bathrooms and we have worked on the workshop. We thank everyone who has been able to help with the renovations. We understand that not everyone can come down to help due to the virus and financial circumstances. We encourage any member to stop by to help on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. We were hoping to have the first phase done in time to open a portion of the depot as a museum and display the model railroad layouts for Christmas. There is still a lot of work to do, so we can't say the museum will be open then. We still need donations to buy materials and pay our contractors. Every little bit helps. For the time being, we will have only board meetings at the Depot. This is to safeguard our members from any chance of catching the virus. It is on this note we wish everyone the happiest of holidays and hope everyone is safe and well through this crisis.

Bernie Hanmore



CONTRIBUTORS

- 4 Anonymous Donors
- Elizabeth & Bruce Angstadt
- Dale & Karen Barnard
- Ben Bartlett
- Carl & Lysanne Belke
- Marilyn & Daryl Black
- Linda Bollensen
- Wayne Brown
- Mary Burkett
- Huntington Christie
- Dave Christoph
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French Creek Valley Express

A Publication of the
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Historical Society

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French Creek Valley Express is published Spring and Fall. Those wishing to submit material must do so no later than 30 days prior to publication, i.e. by April 1st or October 1st. All submissions are subject to editing for length and clarity. Queries must include full name, address, and daytime phone number or e-mail address.

Memberships:

\$20 individual; \$35 family;
\$5 student under 18

The corporate Gold, Silver, and Bronze memberships and Lifetime memberships have been eliminated.

All members with lifetime memberships will not lose them.

**Budget / Finance /
Insurance / Compliance**

Since the last printing of the Valley Express, the Crawford Heritage Community Foundation has hosted the 2nd annual Crawford Gives days (two days this year instead of just one), and we were one of 113 non-profit organizations asking for donation for our worthy cause of restoring the B&LE freight station. Held virtually on August 10 and 11th, the campaign this year raised \$379,849 from 3,188 gifts. Of that total the French Creek Valley Railroad Historical Society – Depot Museum received 44 gifts totaling \$5,605. The Heritage Foundation added a 1.4% match to our total, so our GRAND total was \$6,090.31! **BLOW THE WHISTLE! !**

Upcoming in November will be the Palmiero Toyota Give Back program. This is a month long voting event, where individuals simply stop by the dealership on the Conneaut Lake Road, circle the name of their favorite charity (AS IN THE FRENCH CREEK VALLEY RR HISTORICAL SOCIETY – DEPOT MUSEUM) on a slip of paper and drop it in the box. That's it. No cost, no hassle, no sales talk. Anyone can vote and you can vote once a day, every day for the whole month!! Then, based on the total amount Palmiero decides to "give back", and the total votes cast for each charity (will be probably at least 40-50), that will determine the amount received by each charity. We will be seeking to raise \$5,000 to be used for display cases, etc in our main gallery area. So, this is a fundraiser that ALL of our members, and their friends, and families can help out with, and all it costs is a very small amount of your time. Remember – you can vote only once a day, but you can vote every day! **BLOW THE WHISTLE AGAIN!**

- Scott Ladner



History & Archives

Archivist Carl Timko has been reviewing the most recent donations from Steve Timko to sort the materials to be entered in the collection or designated for resale. There will be many books for sale and some memorabilia that doesn't relate to the area history. Carl also

will be taking snapshots of the material and have them posted on the website, but that won't be for awhile yet.

The FCVRRHS always welcomes donations of historical memorabilia that relates to the Crawford County area. Books, timetables, railroad documents, and photos are just some of the items we would welcome. Some may be displayed at the Depot after it opens, and some may be stored for reference material.

- Carl Timko

Membership

Since the last issue of Valley Express, there have been changes on the board. Carl Timko declined to accept another term as secretary. He has served as secretary for 14 years. No secretary was elected to replace him, so Vice President Scott Ladner assumed the duties as secretary, temporarily, as Jean Weber is now the new secretary. *Congratulations, Jean!*

Also, directors Stan Niwa, John Nagurney, and Ron Stafford resigned their posts for various reasons. Richard Roberts and Jim Saulsbery were named as successors.

As reported on the front page, we lost one of our former members in Tom Collard.

Everyone that knew Tom has their memories of him. Most are of his jokes at the membership meetings and when visiting his train shop. But, Tom did a lot for the city of Meadville and the FCVRRHS. He helped co-found the First Friday event in Meadville. His business helped draw customers for the other businesses in the @ the Bank location on Park Avenue in Meadville. The FCVRRHS had set up the layout next to his shop during the holidays in two consecutive years. One of his last gestures for the FCVRRHS was to donate the remaining inventory of his train shop to the organizations to sell to raise funds. We still have some of that inventory. We will miss you, Tom.

A former junior member's father passed away on September 17. Eric Thompson, father of Jesse Thompson, passed from a heart attack. He was 60 years old. Eric also worked with Carl Timko and Jack Sheets at Meadville Tool Grinding. Jesse's membership came about from Eric's association with Carl and Jack. Jesse is all grown up

now and is a U.S. Marine. Condolences to Jesse and his family.

- Carl Timko

Model Railroading

Nick Ozorak informed the editor that since the CoVid-19 pandemic is still keeping members from gathering, there is no report from the Model Railroading Committee. That does not mean no one has been working on their layouts.

Denny Mead has downsized his outdoor G scale layout, mostly in order to better maintain the layout. However, as recently as September 23, the layout had to be shut down for the remainder of the year due to a broken water main at his residence. Denny says that his yard, as well as a portion of the layout will have to be dug up to effect repairs. Denny, however is building several models for his layout, including an Erie caboose, and painting several buildings that were in need of sprucing up.

- Carl Timko

In another disheartening bit of news, Kalmbach Publishing, which puts out *Model Railroader*, *Trains*, *Classic Trains*, *Classic Toy Trains*, and *Garden Railways* announced that *Garden Railways Magazine* is ceasing print production as of the Fall 2020 issue. Kalmbach claimed that a column would be dedicated for garden railway modelers in *Model Railroader* and that the subscriptions would be transferred. However, there was no G scale column in the November issue of *Model Railroader*. So far that it is known, there are no more magazines dedicated to large gauge model railroading. The magazine had 32 years of service before folding up.

- Carl Timko

October 17 marked the 60th anniversary of the birth of the Erie-Lackawanna. The Erie Railroad and Delaware Lackawanna & Western merged on this day to form the EL. It would operate for another 15 years 5 months when Conrail took over. Unfortunately, a social celebration can't happen due to the pandemic. Instead, read a book on the EL or look for photos or articles on the internet if you don't have your own photos of the EL. Do some research for an article.

Happy 60th Birthday, EL!

- Dennis Mead, Carl Timko

Just as this issue was getting wrapped up to send to our graphics editor, Pipp Graphics, we were notified that the Mercer Junction Train Shoppe on the diamond in Mercer, PA, is closing at the end of the year. The store dealt in O scale products and is/was an important resource for O-scalers in the area. Dave Minarik, Jr. is the owner and also the drummer in the local rock group, The Clarks. Dave's reason for closing is due to the closing of Mike's Train House (MTH), a key supplier for Dave and his train shop. We wish Dave all the best and thank him for the time he served our needs as model railroaders.

- Carl Timko

Museum

Construction in the Depot slowed considerably this spring but by late June our volunteers were back in force. If you have been following our Facebook page you may be up to date, but if not, the following tasks have been done or are being done:

- ☀ Floors have been leveled, insulated, and sub-floor installed from the main entrance door to, but not including, the north 50 feet of the depot.

- ☀ Drywall has been installed, finished, and painted in the main exhibit area, the bathrooms and the kitchenette/meeting room.

- ☀ Ceilings have been installed in the bathrooms.

- ☀ The porcelain tile floors are installed in both bathrooms as well as all fixtures and grab bars. Both bathrooms are fully operational!

- ☀ New doors have been hung and stained and will be varnished later this year.

- ☀ A concrete handicapped parking pad has been installed at the bottom of the handicapped ramp.

- ☀ New exterior lighting has been installed along the east side of the building (nearest the railroad track).

- ☀ Insulation has been installed in the exterior walls, roof and floor of the area containing the library/office, storage room, workshop, and central exhibit area.

- ☀ Sub-floors and drywall on the ceilings have been installed in that area as well.

- ☀ All remaining drywall is being installed for the central portion of the building.

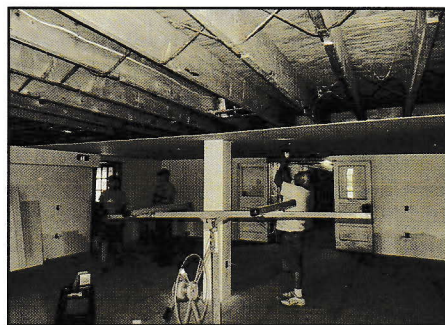
- ☀ A temporary wall is being constructed to seal off the north 50 feet of the building for the winter.

- ☀ Heaters have been installed in the small storage room and are being installed in the library/office, and workshop.

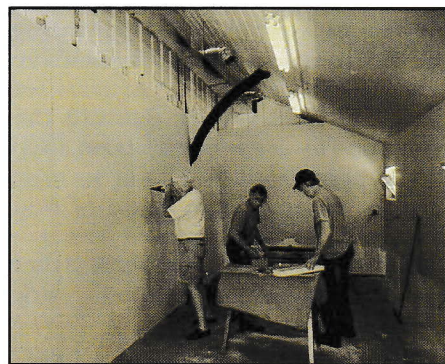
- ☀ Materials to construct the wainscoting, baseboards, chair rail, and window trim are acclimating to the space and will be stained, finished and installed this winter.



Bernie Hanmore and Ed Cronin installing drywall in the kitchenette at the Meadville Railroad Depot. (Jack Sheets photo)



Bernie Hanmore, John Snyder, and Dan Pfeiffer hanging the lowered ceiling in the Meadville Railroad Depot. (Jack Sheets photo)



Bernie Hanmore, John Snyder and Dan Pfeiffer hanging drywall in the kitchenette at the Meadville Railroad Depot. (Jack Sheets photo)

We are to the point where we need to decide what the story is that we

want to present to our visitors. What exhibits will we include to help with the story?

We are over the hump with this project, but still have a ways to go before it will be complete. Currently, we have not applied for additional grants because we are not eligible, however, all members and their families can help by large or small donations as well as casting your ballot for FCV at the Palmiero fundraising event starting November 1st, every day for 2 weeks.

- Ed Cronin

Property and Equipment

Due to the pandemic, there hasn't been much activity at the Railroad Display Site. Word has been received that Jack Sheets has raised enough money for the glass for the snowplow. Hopefully, we can get the new glass in before the cold and wet weather settles in.

- John Snyder, Carl Timko

In October 1945, at the Russell Snowplow & Car Co. of Ridgway, PA, a double-track snowplow was built for the Delaware Lackawanna & Western Railroad as #95904. When the snowplow became property of the Erie Lackawanna, the snowplow kept its Lackawanna road number even though it was assigned the number #1306. It kept the number until Conrail took over and renumbered it #64568. Later it ended up on the Wellsboro & Corning Railroad/Tioga Central Railroad. It now sits in Pomona Park in Meadville, owned by the French Creek Valley Railroad Historical Society. *Happy 75th Birthday to the snowplow!*

- Dennis Mead

October also marks the 72nd birthday of our ALCO S2 Erie Railroad #518, having been built in 1948. It served on the Erie Railroad, the Erie Lackawanna Railway, the Cleveland Electric Illuminating Co. and the Ashtabula Carson & Jefferson Railroad before coming to Meadville to be displayed by the FCVRRHS in Pomona Park.

The ages of our other two pieces of rolling stock are 51 years for the Erie Lackawanna caboose, #C356, built by International Car Co. in

1969, and 112 years for the B&LE wood boxcar #80412, which was built for the Union Railroad in 1908.

- Carl Timko

Public Relations & Education

Webmaster Dianne Jones and member Carl Timko have been collaborating to update the website (www.fcvrrhs.org) to eliminate old, outdated postings and correct any content that has been deemed erroneous. The website is one tool that helps the FCVRRHS make first contact with potential new members and keep the current membership informed, as best as time can allow. Don't forget about the Facebook sites of the FCVRRHS and the Meadville Railroad Depot. For additional information visit the website of the Meadville Railroad Depot (www.meadvillerrailroaddepot.com).

There have been no tours of the Railroad Display Site in Pomona Park this year due to the pandemic and the concentration on the restoration of the Depot.

The website will have more merchandise for sale on the website (www.fcvrrhs.org), after Carl Timko is done archiving and sorting donations from Steve Timko. Most will be books, but other items will be posted in the future, but likely not until after the holidays.

- Carl Timko

Special Events / Programs

Events such as model train shows, open houses and memorabilia shows have been virtually non-existent due to the restrictions regarding the CoVid-19 virus pandemic. There are few that have started up again, such as the shows at the Painesville Railroad Museum in Painesville, Ohio. Train shows will be listed on page 6, if there are any. If not, the space will be filled with URL (computer) addresses that have virtual train shows, that showcase manufacturer's newest releases. Trainworld is one business (which also sells via mail and the internet) that shows various makers' goods. They have been having regular videos to lessen the pang of not being at a train show. Trainworld has been having their live showcases on Facebook. Just go to Facebook and search for Trainworld

Live. If any member doesn't have a computer or smart phone, a suggestion would be to visit a member or friend who does (wear a mask and stay socially distant) or visit the local library, if they are open.

- Carl Timko

On The Side Track

An interesting train was run over the Western New York & Pennsylvania Railroad on Friday, September 25. Two former Canadian National M636 locomotives, #637 and #638, hauled 127 empty hoppers from Salamanca, New York, where they were stored, to Meadville to interchange with Norfolk Southern. The train attracted a fair number of railfans as a stream of chasers filed along the tracks in Meadville to photograph and record video of the train. The M636s laid over in Meadville Yard until they went back to Olean on the following Tuesday (September 29). There won't be many more times, if any, that one will see the big six-axle MLW locomotives in Meadville. Since the acquisition of the AC4600CWs, the six-axle units are due to be pared from the roster.

- Carl Timko

On October 3, word was received from Iron Spike Productions, the promoter of the Erie Train Show, that the Erie show scheduled for Sunday, November 8, has been canceled due to the CoVid-19 virus pandemic. The next train show in Erie is tentatively scheduled for Sunday, March 7, 2021 in Rainbow Gardens, Waldameer Park in Erie, PA.

- Carl Timko

The acquisition of the Massena (N.Y.) Lines by Bessemer and Lake Erie Railroad / Canadian National for CSX still hasn't been finalized. At last report on the Surface Transportation Board website, the mayor of Oswego, NY, William Barlow, Jr. sent a letter to the STB board, dated July 13, 2020, to support the acquisition and expressed that the acquisition should move forward. There is a clause that currently prevents the Bessemer from entering a few other short lines, including the Finger Lakes Railway, to do business, even to interchange cars. The clause is written as a condition of sale to protect the short lines from a

takeover by B&LE/CN.

- Carl Timko

CorryRails has received their recently purchased Climax class A 15 ton, 3 foot gauge locomotive, shop number 313. The Climax was purchased from the Keith Christenson estate. Mr. Christenson had purchased it from Charley Reader in the late 1970s. The locomotive was built in 1902 for the Wild Goose Railroad in Alaska during the gold rush.

It became the Golovin Bay Railroad's and then abandoned until Charley Reader discovered it and hauled it down to Ophir, Alaska with the intent of using it on his "Curly Q" Railroad, a tourist operation. More information and photos can be found on CorryRails' website at <https://corryrails.com>.

- CorryRails, Carl Timko

Wreck of B&LE #67

(continued from page 1)

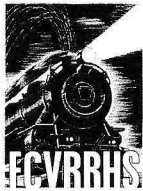
Work began that Sunday to start removing the locomotive and tender, but only light work, as the creek needed to recede before lifting #67 out of the creek.

The *Evening Republican* of March 15, 1910 had an article noting that B&LE crews were starting to drive piling to rebuild the bridge, which aided in lifting the Mogul out of its watery bed.

The #67 was repaired and served the Bessemer until 1936 when it was retired and sold to United Iron & Metal of Baltimore, Maryland for scrap. Interestingly, United Iron & Metal is still in business with two facilities in Baltimore.

Thanks go out to Ron Stafford, Dennis Mead for obtaining the article from *Newspapers.com*, which had the original article of the *Meadville Evening Republican* of March 7, 1910. Information on the locomotive was obtained from *The Bessemer and Lake Erie Railroad* by Roy C. Beaver.





French Creek Valley
Railroad Historical Society
P.O. Box 632
Meadville, PA 16335



FCVRRHS Conrail snowplow #64568
- Carl Timko photo

FCVRRHS Fall 2020 Events

Nov. 21 - Iron & Steel All Gauge Model Train Show

Byzantine Center at the Grove St. Banquet Hall
3801 Shady Run Rd., Youngstown, OH

Admission \$5; children 12 and under are admitted
free; Hours 10 a.m to 3 pm; Operating layout

Dec. 1-4 - Northeast Region NMRA Convention Online

Model Railroad Resources

Facebook - Search for model railroad and railroad videos.

Model Railroad Forum - look for questions and answers on
subjects that interest you. www.modelrailroadforum

Model Railroad Hobby Stores - Search for your favorite store on
your favorite search engine.

Model Railroading Tips and Techniques, Videos -
www.modelrailroadingacademy.com (has free videos as
well as videos that can be purchased)

Model Railroad Hobbyist Magazine - Free online model
railroad magazine - www.model-railroad-hobbyist.com

NMRA - Great website for model railroad standards, also lists
region and division websites. Good place to find out about
conventions. www.nmra.org

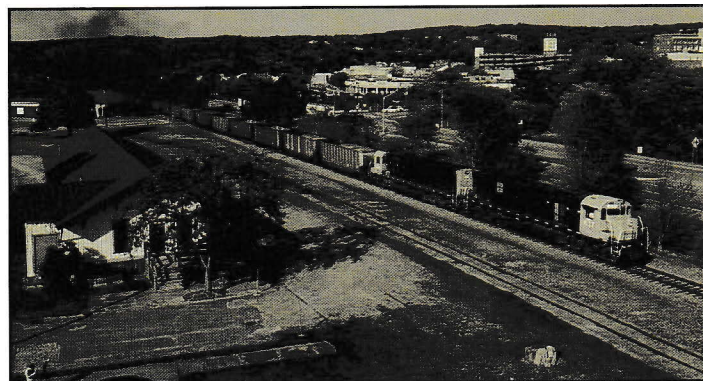
Railserve - Directory for railroad and model railroad
enthusiasts. Information for employed railroaders as well.
www.railserve.com

TrainWorld - New York superstore that sells in most
scales. Occasionally has live interviews with
manufacturers on Facebook. www.trainworld.com

Walthers - Catalog of model railroading supplies. Catalog
available online or purchase from model railroad store.
www.walthers.com

Woodland Scenics - Maker of accessories and scenery supplies.
www.woodlandscenics.com

Other suggestions: Check out the newsletters of various model
railroading clubs and NMRA divisions. NMRA Mid-Central
Region, Division 12 has the Builder's Plate. The division
secretary is our own David Ellis.



Western New York & Pennsylvania Railroad 127 car empty
hopper train arriving in Meadville with WNYP M636s #637 and
#638. Meadville Railroad Depot on left. September 25, 2020.

(Aerial photography by Nick Ozorak)



WNYP 127 car empty hopper train passing by FCVRRHS's
Conrail Russell snowplow #64568 in Meadville on September
25, 2020. WNYP M636s #637 and #638 making what could be
their last appearance in Meadville, as the six-axle locomotives
are due for retirement. (Carl Timko photo)