



French Creek Valley Railroad

Historical Society

P.O. Box 632 Meadville, PA 16335

FALL 2019

Newsletter of the French Creek Valley Railroad Historical Society

Volume 14 Number 2

VALLEY EXPRESS

The Meadville Depot

By Dennis Mead, Carl Timko, and Bill McComas

A Brief History and Current Status

Restoration of the Meadville Railroad Depot is well underway. In the Spring 2019 issue of the Valley Express, the membership was notified of the acquisition on December 20, 2018. The depot, built in 1881 by the Meadville Railway, went through several ownerships due to reorganization or merger. The entities that had title to the structure were the Meadville Railway, the Meadville and Linesville Railway, the Meadville Conneaut Lake & Linesville Railroad, the Pittsburgh Shenango & Lake Erie Railroad, the Pittsburgh Bessemer & Lake Erie Railroad and the Bessemer & Lake Erie Railroad. The Bessemer then leased the structure to Mr. O.S. Brock, who then leased it to Mr. John Huber who turned it into the John Huber Milling Co. In 1969, the building was sold to the Mattocks Brothers (Mattocks Five Inc. also known as 5M), becoming Meadville Farm & Garden. The building continued service until February 2018 when Mattocks Five entered into bankruptcy. That is when the FCVRRHS sprang into action to purchase the depot for the purpose of using it as a museum and headquarters. The deal was closed on December 29, 2018.

Since then, members have gathered for work sessions on Thursdays and Saturdays to renovate the building, with some members working more days. So far, walls and windows have been framed, with four windows installed, plumbing has been started for the two bathrooms, small trees and bushes have been cut down and a storage loft has been disassembled.

As of this writing, Mr. Alvin Hostetler and his crew have begun replacing the roof. Many onlookers have flocked to the site, photographed the work and posted it on Facebook. In fact, there were reports the roof has been completed on Monday, September 16, but the roof wasn't actually completed until September 23.

Members are encouraged to volunteer on Thursdays and Saturdays, starting at 10 a.m. Those that haven't volunteered yet and wish to do so, must complete a workman's compensation exemption form, have it notarized at Brad Roae's office in the Downtown Mall (for free), and return it to the depot or a board member before starting work. Also, all volunteers must sign in when starting to work and sign out when done for the day.

For a glance at what has been done, check out the photographs throughout this issue.



The former Meadville Farm & Garden Meadville store shortly after being purchased by the French Creek Valley Railroad Historical Society. It was originally a Meadville Railway passenger and freight depot. (Nick Ozorak photo)

B&LE 150th Anniversary

This October marks the 150th anniversary for the Bessemer and Lake Erie Railroad. Originally started as the Bear Creek Railroad and later renamed the Shenango & Allegheny Railroad, the line still serves western Pennsylvania as a subsidiary of Canadian National. Shenango & Allegheny became the Pittsburgh Shenango & Lake Erie, then the Pittsburgh Bessemer & Lake Erie.

Near the turn of the 20th century, "Pittsburgh" was dropped, renaming the line as Bessemer & Lake Erie. The line was built to haul iron ore and coke to the furnaces of Andrew Carnegie's steel mills and coal from mines located on the Bessemer, most along several branches. The mainline extended from Conneaut, Ohio to North Bessemer, PA. The Bessemer served several communities in Crawford County, including Springboro, Conneautville (though, the last business, the Farmers' Exchange, closed recently), Linesville, Conneaut Lake, and Meadville (via the Meadville Branch, formerly the Meadville Conneaut Lake & Linesville), Meadville Junction, and Hartstown.

Commemorating the event, the FCVRRHS is selling postcards featuring the Bessemer and Lake Erie boxcar #80412, which is on display at Pomona Park in Meadville. The boxcar was built in 1908, for the Union Railroad, a mere 39 years after the formation of the Bessemer's predecessors. The commemorative postcards are available for 50 cents each. To purchase one or many, contact Carl Timko by emailing him at blebuddy@yahoo.com or by visiting the Crawford County Convention and Visitors Bureau on Conneaut Lake Road, Vernon Township (across from Subway). The CCCVB will charge 53 cents for the postcards.

- Carl Timko



From the Stationmaster's Office

For those of you who regularly volunteer at the depot, you know how far we have come with the renovation since we started working on it. For those members who do not know, we are progressing very nicely.

We have framed several walls and windows and have done extensive work on the floor. The plumbing has been started, four new windows installed, and we may have the roof installed by the time this issue is distributed. There are a lot of people to thank for us getting this far - all the donors, providers, and volunteers. None of this would have been done without the interest of the community. We have received a few grants, but this only takes care of renovation costs. Operating costs will have to come from sales and any kind of program that will generate a fair amount of income. Sales come from our regular line of merchandise and donated items that we can resell. Programs are being studied by the Steering Committee; however, we are open to any ideas you may have. You can submit your ideas by email or by attending the membership meetings. The attendance at the meetings has been growing, but it would be great to voice your opinion at meetings. There is always room for another member. Let's hear what you have to say.



Bernie Hanmore

French Creek Valley Express

A Publication of the
French Creek Valley Railroad
Historical Society

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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.

CONTRIBUTORS

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- Blane & Kathleen Ohl
- Ed & Suann Cronin
- Larry A. DeYoung
- James Pettengill
- Scott & Joyce Ladner
- Val & Karen Eiler
- Dale Pysher
- David P. & Janet Miller
- Richard Friedmand & Courtney Dodge
- Jim Saulsbery
- Huntington Christie
- Jack & Linda Sheets
- Paul & Frances Huber
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- John Guffey
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- Bonnie Murphy
- Elizabeth Ozorak
- Ray & Ellie Vanguilder
- Melanie Peirsel
- Karl & Bobbie Peterson
- Jay Verno
- Scott Woods

Budget / Finance / Insurance / Compliance

As can be seen by looking at the Contributors List on page 2, there has been a good number of donations, especially towards the depot renovations. We have garnered at least two grants; one from the Tom E. Dailey Foundation and one from Walmart. There is one pending from the Rotary Club as of this writing. Maryann Martin has one more grant application to send, but that would be all for the rest of the year. Maryann is to be commended on her efforts to hunt down these grants. But, unfortunately, the grants cannot be applied to operating expenses. More information can be found on that subject under the Museum header on this page. Any reader who knows of a source of grant money or donations that hasn't been tried should contact Maryann or a member of the board.

- Ed Cronin, Maryann Martin

History & Archives

The organization has received several donations of memorabilia and model railroad equipment. Recently, Ms. Rita Walp donated a box full of files kept by her grandfather, Frank Mason, who worked on the Erie Railroad and Erie Lackawanna. Included were a couple of personal awards from the railroad and its employees. Some photographs also were included, but the most interesting item were his recollections of his time with the Erie Railroad.

Fellow member Steve M. Timko, Jr. has donated a couple of loads of memorabilia and some model railroad equipment. Most are timetables and books. These will be sorted and designated for inclusion into the archives or for selling to raise funds.

Many thanks to Ms. Walp and Steve for their consideration of the FCVRRHS as a good home for their collections. The FCVRRHS is always ready to accept donations of railroad collectibles.

- Carl Timko

Membership

Since the last issue, the French Creek Valley Railroad Historical Society has welcomed several new members. Now on board are Arden

Hibbard, Greg Kedzierski, Tim Ladner, Norm & Patti M'Sadoques, the Novosel family (Ken, Theresa, Adam, and Jake), Tom & Jackie Palmer, Don Porter, Steve & Patty Sample, Brian & Jean Weber, and Charley and Bonnie Zilhaver. Welcome, all!

Sadly, we lost two members: Dr. Bob Moyers and Bill Yochum. Our thoughts are with the family of these two gentlemen.

One change of officers occurred from the election of officers and directors. Scott Ladner has assumed the duties of vice president after being elected for the position. Dennis Mead declined to continue as vice president. Scott is the new membership chairman and is asking the membership to help recruit more new members. He also has instituted a closed raffle among the members who attend the monthly membership meetings.

- Dennis Mead, Scott Ladner,
Carl Timko

Model Railroading

Nick Ozorak revealed at the September 2019 membership meeting that the Meadville Model Railroad Club will operate in a different format. This time, the students will visit layouts of FCVRRHS members and either help build or add to the layouts, or learn about operating a layout. Nick thanked Ed Cronin and Bernie Hanmore for making their layouts available to the students and asks any other layout owner to make their layouts available.

Tony Petruso, one of the more well known model railroaders in the community is planning to donate his O-scale layout in the near future. It will reside in the depot along with possibly three other layouts that were featured at the 2018 Holiday layout display. Those are the model railroad built by the Meadville Model Railroad Club, the G-scale loop that has featured a Polar Express train and the one car trolley. The other layout that may be in the depot is Ed Cronin's HO switching layout.

-Nick Ozorak

Museum

FINANCIAL REPORT: "WE NEED YOUR HELP"

Date: 09/09/2019

The response from the community for the purchase and restoration of

the Meadville Railroad Depot, has been substantial. Donations were enough through August of 2019 to allow us to cover all of our operating expenses. Donations also assisted with initial costs to get the Meadville Railroad Depot Project started with the purchase of the building and property, acquiring a building permit, obtaining an environmental assessment and completing a land survey.

Demolition was done by our all-volunteer crew so the only cost incurred was for two dumpsters to dispose of materials that could not be reused. Currently, only three contracts will be let: one for installation of a new roof, one for plumbing, and one for insulation of the floor, walls, and ceiling in the southern end of the building. We have funds to cover those contract costs from donations and grants.

Our all-volunteer crew has saved us substantial money in labor costs. Materials have been purchased for major work in the Phase One space. We have reached nearly 40% of our goal in donations and grants to complete this space. These funds have purchased materials for the installation of unfinished walls, leveling the existing floor, some wiring, four new windows, a new front door and bathroom fixtures. This will allow us to finish the Phase One space in a rough state, meaning without any final finishes to the walls and ceilings and no new lighting. We also still need funds to finish the kitchenette and to complete installations for many of the utilities. We estimate that these costs will total about \$50,000.

Our grant administrator has exhausted nearly all grant opportunities available to us for this year. They have been successful and greatly assisted in paying for material costs and for the insulation contract. She will continue to apply for grants that may assist us and we will continue to restore the Depot as funds are available.

Recent reports from me, your treasurer, indicate the Society has over \$100,000 in cash. Please realize that 75% of that will go away when the new roof is installed and other earmarked project expenses are paid.

Of great concern is our ongoing

operating expenses:

● They include annual costs for insurance, utilities, taxes, stormwater fee, etc.

● Operating Expenses average out to about \$1,125 per month or \$13,500 annually

● Although we may receive exemption from paying taxes once the museum is open, most utilities are not yet installed, so relief from taxes may not reduce the bottom line.

● Grants do not pay for operating expenses.

● Operating Expenses never end.

Once the museum is open, we will plan events and fundraisers to assist with operating expenses; but, during this restoration period, we are totally dependent on donations to cover those costs.

WE NEED YOUR HELP BADLY RIGHT NOW.

We are requesting that each member consider making a monthly contribution of \$20 or a onetime annual contribution. If each of our members would donate \$20 a month, our operating expenses would be covered so we can remain solvent.

Please consider stepping up with a monthly donation of \$20 or an annual contribution.

Sincerely,

Ed Cronin/Treasurer



Bernie Hanmore and Rich Roberts cutting out old post in the depot.
(Maryann Martin photo)



Scott Ladner tossing old wood tray into a dumpster at the depot.
(Maryann Martin photo)

Property and Equipment

Even though the depot has gained the majority of our attention, the railroad equipment at Pomona Park still needs our attention. Dennis Mead finished the lettering on the B&LE boxcar by applying the reporting marks and road number on both doors. With the exception of some interior work and minor exterior work, the restoration is complete. It has not been determined if and when the maintenance of way steps will be removed. There may be some roof repair to do also.

Jack Sheets informed the members at the September meeting that the roof of the Erie Railroad ALCo S2 #518 will need repainting. The weather has caused the paint to wear away and expose the metal to oxidation.



Mark Kramer applying lettering to Conrail Russell snowplow #64568
(Carl Timko photo)

Jack has touched up the interior paint in the Erie Lackawanna caboose #C356 during the spring, in time for the caboose to welcome visitors for the summer.

The lettering on the snowplow was designed by Mike Vickey and manufactured and applied by Mark Kramer. It is officially Conrail #64568, the last number it wore in regular service. There is work to be done yet. A fence needs to be erected between the WNYP and the snowplow to protect visitors and crews. All 12 panes of glass need replaced. Jack Sheets says it will cost \$80 per pane of glass. He is looking for members to help by donating for a pane of glass. Two panes have been covered so far.

-Jack Sheets, Stan Niwa, Carl Timko

Public Relations & Education

The caboose tours are done for the year, with the exception of appointments. We did sell a few items, including t-shirts, a travel bag, and some of our new B&LE 150th anniversary postcards. There were some days when we got a small crowd that necessitated two members to be tour guides. Thank you to all the members that volunteered their few hours a day.

We are saddened at the passing of Erie Train Show promoter Carl Amidon, on August 12, 2019. It will be strange to be at the Erie show and not hear his booming voice. Our condolences to his family.



Carl Amidon

Since Carl Amidon's passing, there was some anxiety of what would happen to the show. It seems that Iron Spike Productions of Slippery Rock, PA will be the new promoter. The Hartle brothers (sons of Bob Hartle of the Clarion Model Railroad Club/CMR Products) are the faces of Iron Spike Productions. It should be an interesting train show on November 3rd.

-Carl Timko

Special Events & Programs

The Meadville Railroad Depot steering committee is looking into programs that might be used to raise funds for the operation of the depot. No one program was specified, but Carl Timko did say the planned Railroad Author's Day could be something that can help. The event, still being planned, would invite several authors of railroad books to come to sell and sign their books. The authors would have a choice of donating one sum or a percentage of their sales.

-Bernie Hanmore, Carl Timko

The French Creek Valley Railroad Historical Society is planning on having a couple of tables at the Erie Train Show. Since the show has new promoters, it is unsure if we will be in the same spot as in the March show.

-Carl Timko



Local News

Bessemer & Lake Erie Railroad railfans are a bit relieved after the Age of Steam Roundhouse Museum of Coshocton, Ohio acquired the B&LE 2-10-4 #643, which has been sitting on an isolated piece of track in McKees Rocks, PA. The FCVRRHS tried to buy it off of the owner, Glenn Campbell. At the time it was housed in a building along with a passenger car and a switcher. The building fell down and CSX then pulled the connecting switch. The late Jerry Jacobson tried to buy the #643 shortly before he passed away.

*-Trains Magazine Newswire,
Carl Timko*

The WNYF Railroad announced that the Montreal Locomotive Works six-axle locomotives, the M630 and the M636, will be retired to make room for eight GE AC4600CWs. These units were CSX AC6000CWs when built in 1999. CSX later downgraded them in horsepower. Two of the units, #6006 and #6007 will be used for parts. They have already been seen in Meadville, along with the #6002 and sent up to the Olean, N.Y. engine facilities.

*-Trains Magazine Newswire,
Sid Walker*

On the Side Track

Interesting news for the area and great news for Erie. WABTEC, who owns Motive Power Inc. and who recently purchased the GE Locomotive Works in Erie, is closing the MPI shops in Boise, Idaho and moving them to the Erie facilities. MPI has built and rebuilt many locomotives over the years. Some of the locomotives built were low-emission locomotives. The Boise facility started rebuilding locomotives as Morrison-Knudsen.

- Trains Newswire



Conrail Russell double track snowplow #64568 with the lettering completed. It still needs new glass and floor work. *(Carl Timko photo)*



Stan Niwa and John Snyder removing fencing at the depot. *(Maryann Martin photo)*



Terry Martin and Jack Sheets loading brush and cut trees into a trailer at the depot. *(Maryann Martin photo)*



Terry Martin buffing up a donated brass locomotive bell at his residence. *(Maryann Martin photo)*



Crew hanging the first new window at the Meadville Railroad Depot. *(Maryann Martin photo)*



Arden Hibbard working to stabilize an extended section of the depot. *(Maryann Martin photo)*



First two windows are installed on the depot. *(Maryann Martin photo)*

West side of depot showing the roof nearly completed. New windows installed on the south side. *(Norm M'Sadoques photo)*



The east and south side of the depot after completion of the roof. The roof may be done, but there is a lot of work to do, inside and outside. Every bit helps. *(Maryann Martin photo)*



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



B & LE 150th Anniversary Postcard

**French Creek Valley Railroad Historical Society
Calendar of Events
Fall 2019 to Spring 2020**

October 5,6 – Great Berea Train Show

Cuyahoga County Fairgrounds • 19201 E. Bagley Rd., Middleburg Heights, OH
Hours: 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. ; Admission \$8; 2-day pass \$10

**October 6 - Beaver-Lawrence Railway Historical Society
Fall Train Show**

Shenango Twp. VFD, 2424 • E. Washington St., New Castle, PA
Hours: 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.; Admission: \$5

October 27 - Castle Shannon Train Show & Rail Event

Castle Shannon VFD, 3600 Liberty Rd., Castle Shannon, PA.
Hours: 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.; Admisson: \$7

November 3 - Erie Train Show

Rainbow Gardens, Waldameer Park, Erie, PA.
Hours: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.; Admission: \$5

November 9, 10 - Greenberg's Great Train & Toy Show

Monroeville Convention Center, 209 Mall Blvd., Monroeville, PA
Hours: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.; Admission: Saturday \$10, Sunday \$9;
Saturday ticket good for both days

November 30 - TCA Lake Erie Chapter Thanksgiving Train Meet

UAW Hall, 5615 Chevrolet Blvd., Parma, OH
Hours: 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.; Admission: \$6

February 2 - Buffalo Snowball Train Show

Polish Falcons, 4555 Columbia Ave., Depew, NY
Hours: 10a.m. to 3 p.m.

February 22,23 - Greenberg's Great Train & Toy Show

Monroeville Convention Center, 209 Mall Blvd., Monroeville, PA.

Various train shows, layout displays, museum tours, and rail excursions are likely to be announced in your monthly Second Section.



Bernie Hanmore prepping the sill of a new window at the depot.
(Maryann Martin photo)



John Snyder and Jim Saulsbery pulling nails from old boards to possibly reuse the boards.
(Maryann Martin photo)