

VALLEY EXPRESS

The Pennsylvania Petroleum Railroad - Part 2

By Dennis Mead and Pete Gifford

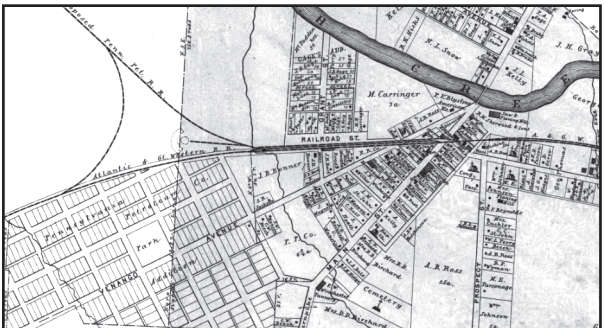
The Beginning of the End of the Pennsylvania Petroleum Railroad

A change was on the horizon for the project in 1873. After the Civil War a construction boom occurred in the railroad industry resulting in 33,000 miles of new trackage laid in this country between 1868 and 1873. The railroads were the nation's largest employer outside of agriculture, and it involved large amounts of money and risk. With large infusions of cash from speculators, the results were overbuilding of infrastructure, while offering no immediate or early returns.

The Atlantic & Great Western was one of those railroads caught up in this frenzy. Management had many plans for building new lines, such as the PPRR and an earlier project intending to connect the A&GW at Franklin with the Catawissa Railroad and the Philadelphia & Reading Railroad in Eastern Pennsylvania (a subject of a future article here). But all the expenditures for these projects were not returning cash to keep the railroad operating. The railroad, in general, was showing a lack of maintenance of its equipment and of its facilities.

As the published reports came out about the railroad during this period, it was less directed on the advancement of its construction, and more on its survival. In January of 1873, requests came from A&GW President George B. McClellan to use proceeds from the sale of bonds of its leased lines, the Shenango & Allegheny, the Pennsylvania Petroleum and the Pithole Valley railroads, to pay the interest on the A&GW Second Mortgage bond due on March 1st. The request was approved by the railroad's principal stockholder, James McHenry, but the action resulted in the starvation of these projects. Then, in September, the U.S. economy entered a crisis known world-wide as the Panic of 1873. The failure of a major U.S. bank, Jay Cooke & Company, later that month created a chain reaction of bank failures in the United States, resulting in the New York Stock Exchange closing for 10 days starting on the 20th of that month. Railroad construction projects stopped immediately, and unemployment jumped greatly.

(continued on page 5)



Map of proposed interchange between Atlantic & Great Western RR and Pennsylvania Petroleum Railroad in Cambridge Springs in 1876.

The FCVRRHS Has A Home!

It has taken the organization 14 years to find a home. The French Creek Valley Railroad Historical Society had been searching since its resurrection in 2004 to call a place home, and it has finally happened. The FCVRRHS won the right in bankruptcy court to purchase the former Meadville Farm & Garden property, which closed its doors in February 2018. Officers and directors of the FCVRRHS board have worked tirelessly to secure funding after bidding on the property at the auction last year.

The building was built in 1881 by the Meadville Railway for use as a passenger and freight station. It then served the Meadville & Linesville Railway in 1884. The Meadville Conneaut Lake & Linesville became its owner until the line was leased by the Bessemer and Lake Erie Railroad's predecessor in the early part of the 20th century and then merged into the Bessemer in 1947.

A steering committee has been formed to guide the organization on its path to creating a museum in the building and raise funds for repairs and projects within the building.

Work crews have already started to clean up the interior, working twice a week. Only members are permitted to work inside. If a non-member who isn't a contractor wants to help, they must become a member.

Donations to help renovate the building are greatly appreciated. Donations can be sent by mail to FCVRRHS P.O. Box 632 Meadville, PA 16335, or by visiting the website at www.fcvrrhs.org and clicking on the donate button.

- Carl Timko



From the Stationmaster's Office

By now, all our members know that the snowplow is on display at Pomona Park. Most members now know the FCVRRHS has purchased the former Meadville Farm & Garden Supply building at 136 Mead Ave. in Meadville. That building is now referred to as the Meadville Depot or Meadville Railroad Depot. We have a couple of things to do on the snowplow, like replace some windows and have the lettering done. We also have to put up fencing around it. That would complete that project. We have a lot of work to do on the depot. The biggest project is the roof. We will patch up what we can until we can raise enough funds to pay for the new roof. Meanwhile, we will be applying for grants, large and small, to help us get other work done. The French Creek Valley Railroad Historical Society is calling on the members to help with the renovation, be it hands-on work or monetary donations. In some instances we will need to raise funds to match grant amounts that we are applying for. The sooner we can get repairs made, the sooner we can open the depot as a museum, and then save money through other means. Then, once we are open, we have to make the museum self-sustaining to stay open. We can do that through events and tours, but also through donations and dues. If you know someone that is interested in our organization and projects, please, invite them to join as a member. The membership is encouraged to do what they can to help. We finally have a home after all these years. Help us keep it for a long time to come. Thank you.



Bernie Hanmore

CONTRIBUTIONS & GIFTS

- Sherman Allen
- John K. Howell
- Richard Meuer
- David Christoph
- Richard Biemer
- Ed & Suann Cronin
- Carl Ferguson
- Bernard & Lori Hanmore
- Dan & Delores Higham
- Scott & Joyce Ladner
- Imperial Carbide
- Paul & Francie Huber
- David P. & Janet Miller
- Chris Myers
- Charles Webber III
- Mary Burkett
- John Guffey
- Terry & Maryann Martin
- Bill & Yetivemarie McComas
- Dennis & Donna Mead
- Gary Baker, Sr.
- Dale & Mary Humes
- Ben Bartlett
- Jack & Linda Sheets
- Paul Kulishek
- Wayne Brown
- Huntington Christie
- James Pettingill
- Juanita Hampton
- Ted Trewer
- Crawford County Convention & Visitors Bureau

Check out our website at www.fcvrrhs.org



French Creek Valley Express

A Publication of the
French Creek Valley Railroad
Historical Society

Officers

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 John Snyder
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 John Nagurney
 Ron Stafford
 Nick Ozorak

Webmaster

Dianne Jones

Editor

Carl Timko

Assistant Editor

Dennis Mead

Contact Information

P.O. Box 632
 Meadville, PA 16335

Website: www.fcvrrhs.org

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. Individual membership dues are \$20.00/year, family membership dues are \$35.00/year (\$1.00 for juniors to 18 years) for the period July 1- Jun 30. New member dues received after January 1 are good through the following full year period. Support from local businesses is welcomed: Gold, Silver and Bronze levels at \$500.00, \$250.00, and \$100.00, respectively, are available.

Budget / Finance / Insurance / Compliance

Noting the subheading above, the Budget/Finance committee has been renamed, as per part of the new bylaws. This will help better define the role of the committee.

The organization is accepting donations to help pay for renovation expenses of the Meadville Depot. There also will be fundraisers and hopefully a number of grants to help pay the bills. Membership dues will also help. The membership is encouraged to recruit more new members. Of course, some funds will still go towards the completion of the restoration of the snowplow and a few minor details of other rolling stock.

Treasurer Ed Cronin plans to resign his post in June. Long-time member Al Reibel will be taking over Ed's remaining one year of his term. Al has served previously as a director.

- Carl Timko

History & Archives

With the acquisition of the former Meadville Farm & Garden, Dennis Mead and Ron Stafford have been looking through old newspaper files for information on the depot and the Meadville, Conneaut Lake & Linesville Railroad. A lot of information has been found, but confirmation of exact dates of changes of ownership are still being sought. Photographs from the depot's heyday also are being sought.

- Dennis Mead, Carl Timko

Membership

The organization is growing with several new members joining since the last edition of the *Valley Express*. We welcome James Garfield, James Glover, Maryann Martin, Robert Olson, Don Porter, Richard Roberts, Gerard Roncolato, Mike Shannon, and Dr. Dean Spencer, Welcome aboard, all!

The membership by-laws were revised in the February meeting. The changes are too many to list in the *Valley Express*, but will be emailed to all those that have email. It is necessary that all members share their email with the FCVRRHS so notices, the *Second Section* and files, such as the revised by-laws, may be sent to you in a cost efficient manner. The

U.S. Postal Service has raised the price of mailing a one ounce letter from 50 cents to 55 cents. The *Valley Express* will continue to be mailed to the membership, for now.

- Carl Timko

Model Railroading

The Meadville Model Railroad Club is progressing towards completion of the layout. At last report, the next task was to start on basic scenery. The layout was on display along with three others at the holiday layout display in November and December. Visitors could see the progress being made as the layout was being built while it was at the storefront on Market Street.

In addition to the continued work on the layout, the group participated in two field trips in March. The first took them to Allegheny College to meet Michael Mehler of the Communication Arts department. Michael uses models to design the sets for theatrical productions, and he discussed his model making techniques and how to give a small space more depth. The second trip had students participating in an operating session on the train layout of Michael Hauk. The club is thankful to both of these gentlemen for providing their time to educate our youth and gain perspective on model railroading.

-Nick Ozorak



Meadville Model Railroad Club building scenery for the club layout -Nick Ozorak

For those who have a Roku box or stick, a new channel has been added. The *Model Railroad Hobbyist* now has a channel of videos of tips and how-to subjects called *What's Neat in Model Railroading*, hosted by Ken Patterson.

Model Railroad Hobbyist is a free online magazine that is full of articles, photos, and tips, along with advertisements to help pay their bills and make the magazine free. All

issues, even back to 2009, are accessible. The magazine can be seen by going to <https://model-railroad-hobbyist.com/magazine>.

The FCVRRHS always accepts donations of model railroading equipment and accessories. Most will be used to take to train shows to sell to raise funds for our many projects. Should something catch our eye, however, it may be used on any of the layouts we have or will have, or if the situation warrants, be held for preservation.

- Carl Timko

Museum

As noted on page 1, the FCVRRHS has acquired the former Meadville Farm & Garden building, the former Bessemer and Lake Erie Railroad freight and passenger station in Meadville. The intent is to use the building as a museum, organization headquarters, meeting place and storage of archives and artifacts. The building will need some major renovations including repairing the roof, installing bathrooms, windows, and other interior work.



The former Meadville Farm & Garden, now owned by the FCVRRHS -Nick Ozorak

Though grants will be applied for, donations are necessary to not only complete the renovations, but to keep up with operating expenses, estimated to be \$13,000 per year. Insurance, taxes, utilities, and storm water fees comprise the bulk of the expenses. A flyer has been inserted to explain the project. Members have been asked to donate and help make it known to others their donations will be graciously accepted. Phase I of fundraising planned will be to fund the renovation of one-third of the building so that it may open as a museum before summer starts. Only FCVRRHS members will be allowed to work on the premises (with the exception of Allegheny College students that are covered under the

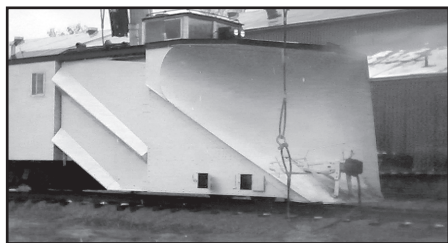
college's insurance policy) due to insurance requirements. If you are not a member and want to volunteer, you will need to submit your application to join. Membership forms are available on our website (www.fcrrhs.org) or contact the secretary at blebuddy@yahoo.com.

Donations can be mailed to
FCVRRHS
P.O. Box 632
Meadville, PA 16335
or online at www.fcrrhs.org or
meadvillerrailroaddepot.com

-Maryann Martin, Carl Timko

Property and Equipment

The snowplow placement work was completed this past November. With the arrival, work to clean up the details on the panel track and repositioning the plow will be performed. A bid was received from a vinyl lettering firm that has been accepted by the Board, and its application will be applied once the warm weather arrives. The only thing left then to do will be glass replacement and fencing between the site and the Western New York and Pennsylvania tracks.



FCVRRHS's Russell snowplow on display
November 20, 2018 *-Carl Timko*

New LED lighting will be installed in the Pomona Park railroad display soon. The old bulbs are less efficient and do not last very long, making it more costly to maintain.

-Dennis Mead

Public Relations & Education

The sales from last November's and this March's train sales were very good. And the model train display at Christmas time in downtown Meadville was another success, as well. Many young visitors were given the chance to operate the model train layout. Hopefully, given that chance will inspire the young ones to become future model railroader members.

We appreciate all who came to visit and those who made purchases. We even welcomed some new members. A huge thank you to Meadville's City Manager, Andy Walker and his staff, and the Chamber of Commerce for helping the FCVRRHS lease the store at 892 Market Street.

Not all of the model railroad equipment could be at the Erie Train Show in March, but we had a successful show, nonetheless. That being said, the FCVRRHS still accepts donations of model railroad equipment that is in good condition.

A few of the 2019 calendars are all that remain. The first order was sold out, so an additional 16 were produced. Several of those are now sold, so don't hesitate to order one if you do not already have it.

Thanks go out to all the volunteers who have worked the recent train shows at Rainbow Gardens in Erie, and at the Holiday Layout display in Meadville.

-Dennis Mead, Carl Timko

Special Events & Programs

Though the snowplow and depot have our full attention, a Railroad Author's Day is still in the works. No set date has been established, though it is likely to be at least in the summer months.

- Carl Timko

A "Launch Event" to begin the Phase I fundraising for the Meadville Depot is tentatively scheduled for early May. The event will likely kick off at the depot, provided work is completed enough to open the building to the public.

- Maryann Martin, Bernie Hanmore

On The Side Track

Most members are aware that the Everett Railroad had purchased the FCVRRHS PRR baggage/tool car last year. Plans are to begin restoration soon. What may not be known is Everett RR also has a former Bessemer & Lake Erie combine numbered #23. This car was almost acquired by the FCVRRHS many years ago, even before acquiring the #518. It is operating along with a former CNJ commuter car, and three former DL&W Pullman Multiple-Unit cars.

FCVRRHS member John Howell and his wife Ellen own the Northern Illinois and Wisconsin Railway, doing

business as NIWX. NIWX is a locomotive leasing company managed out of Edinboro, PA. Railfans can keep up with activities by visiting the NIWX Facebook site at this address: <https://www.facebook.com/niwxcorp>

- Carl Timko



NIWX NW2 #9251 recently sold to
Tharaldson Ethanol *- Mike Roberts photo*

General Electric Transportation and Westinghouse Air Brake Technologies have completed their merger. They first announced their plan in May 2018. The completion was announced February 25, 2019. Wabtec now controls the plants in Erie, PA, Grove City, PA and Ft. Worth, TX. At the time of the merger, the Erie plant employed 1700 workers. The day after the merger, employees at the Erie plant went on strike, protesting Wabtec's new rules for employees. The employees went back to work nine days later agreeing to a 90 day period in which the employees cannot go back on strike. During this time, negotiations will begin on a new collective bargaining agreement.

- Democracy Now!, Trains NewsWire

Trains NewsWire announced on Friday March 15 that the N&W 4-8-4 #611 will be running excursions on the Strasburg Railroad on weekends in September and October. The #611 will be visiting another Norfolk & Western steam loco, that being the 4-8-0 #475. It is anticipated, but not confirmed as yet, that the two might double-head four-plus mile Strasburg Railroad. Ticket prices will vary from \$5 to as much as \$750. The higher price might be for the chance to fire the #611.

Tickets are available at www.strasburgrailroad.com. See the Calendar of Events on page 6 for details.

- Trains NewsWire



Pennsylvania Petroleum Railroad

(continued from page 1)

Then came the report in February of 1875 from the Railway Gazette that the Pithole Valley Railroad has abandoned its line between Pithole and Oleopolis. Soon after, they reported in March that the abandoned line was sold at foreclosure in the interest of the PPRR. It was then followed by news from the Harrisburg Telegraph on September 29, 1877 that "the entire property of the Pennsylvania Petroleum Railroad will be sold by the Sheriff of Crawford County next Wednesday at Cambridgeboro".

Piecemealing the Pennsylvania Petroleum Railway

The Atlantic & Great Western / Pennsylvania Petroleum RR project was officially dead, but the idea of constructing it was not about to die. On December 20, 1879 the Pittsburgh Post wrote the abandoned railroad would be completed early next year from Titusville to Cambridge. It was to be known as the Titusville, Cambridge & Lake Erie Railroad. But again the project failed to follow through and on June 18th, 1891 the Evening Republican in Meadville reported the property would be disposed of at a Sheriff's sale. You must admit, these efforts kept the local sheriffs gainfully employed.

Not to give up, a new company was organized to complete the railroad from Erie to Cambridge. The Pittsburgh Daily Post wrote on September 4, 1896 the new name proposed was the New Erie & Eastern. The Lake Shore Railway was interested in backing the project, owing to its interest in the Dunkirk, Allegheny Valley and Pittsburgh Railroad whose trackage ended in Titusville. There were no further reports on where the project went, but it certainly didn't happen.

Trolley railroads began to take hold in northwestern Pennsylvania by the beginning of the 1900's. When the Meadville Street Railway began extending its routes north to

Cambridge Springs, now a resort community, interest from other traction companies started, too. One of those companies was Erie Traction. In December of 1898 it was granted rights to construct a line from Erie through Edinboro to Cambridge, using the old charter of the PPRR. In October of 1900 service began, and in July of 1901 the company attempted to purchase the Cambridge to Titusville franchise without success. Even in April of 1913 the Pittsburgh Post Gazette was reporting that another trolley company would complete construction that summer between the two communities. Ten miles was completed from Titusville, ending in Lincolnville.

And, although a logging company partially built on the old Pithole Valley extension, the rest of the Pennsylvania Petroleum Railroad work was left for Mother Nature to reclaim. One can still see the grading of the line today as you travel east from Cambridge Springs along Route 408, especially looking north of the former State Gamelands.

A complicated but exciting story about a new railroad that was never to happen. That was the Pennsylvania Petroleum Railroad.

Thanks goes out to Ron Stafford, Pete Gifford and Issac Shenk of Pleasantville for their assistance in telling this story. And, thanks goes to the researchers at Google.



Three members of a work crew hauling a cartload of wall panels in the former Meadville Farm & Garden, now known as the Meadville Depot.
- photo Nick Ozorak



South side of Meadville Depot.
- photo Nick Ozorak



Interior of depot. - photo Nick Ozorak



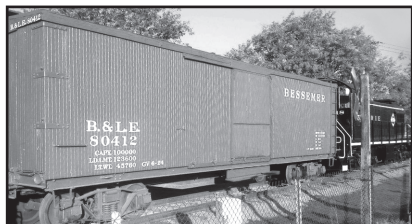
Ed Cronin breaking apart a counter that once served the Meadville Farm & Garden. The counters and shelves are being cleared out to make room to renovate the former B&LE freight and passenger depot into a museum.
- photo Nick Ozorak



FCVRRHS board members in front of the Meadville Depot. (left to right) Dennis Mead, Stan Niwa, Carl Timko, John Snyder, Jack Sheets, Bill McComas, Bernie Hanmore, Ed Cronin, Nick Ozorak, and John Nagurney. Also pictured - Maryann Martin. Ron Stafford is not present.
- photo Terry Martin



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



B & LE Boxcar #80412

**French Creek Valley Railroad Historical Society
Calendar of Events
Spring - Summer - Fall 2019**

March 31 - Iron & Steel All Gauge Model Train Show

St. Lucy Palermo Banquet Center • 394 Tenney Ave., Campbell, OH
Hours: 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.; Admission: \$5

April 7 - Medina Model Railroad & Toy Show

Medina Co. Community Center • 735 Lafayette Rd., Medina, OH
Hours: 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.; Admission: \$6

April 7 - Spring Train Show & Sale

Monaca Turners • 1700 Old Broadhead Rd., Monaca, PA
Hours: 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.; Admission: \$5

April 14 - Youngstown Model Railroad Assn. Toy Train Flea Market

Salem Centerplex • 1098 N. Ellsworth Ave., Salem, OH
Hours: 10:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.; Admission: \$5

April 27 - Pittsburgh Model Railroad Jamboree

Yorktown Hall, Robert Morris University • Moon Twp., PA
Hours: unknown; Reg.: NMRA members \$35; non-members \$45

May 2-5 - NMRA Mid-Central Region Convention

Holiday Inn - Boardman • 7410 South Ave., Youngstown, OH
Admission; \$90 plus extra fares/clinic, tour

May 4,5 - Painesville Model Train Days

Painesville Railroad Museum • 475 Railroad St., Painesville, OH
Hours: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Admission: \$5, \$12

August 3,4 - N Scale Weekend

Jaffa Shrine Center • 2200 Broad Ave., Altoona, PA;
Hours: Sat. 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Sun. 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.; Admission: \$5

August 25 - Painesville Railroad Memorabilia Show

Painesville Railroad Museum • 475 Railroad St., Painesville, OH
Hours: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Admission: \$5, \$12

April 12-14 - Pennsylvania Trolley Museum -Bunny Trolley

1 Museum Rd., Washington, PA

Sept. 28,29 - N&W 611 Excursion on the Strasburg Railroad

Oct. 4-6

Includes N&W reunion with N&W 4-8-0 #475

Oct. 12-14

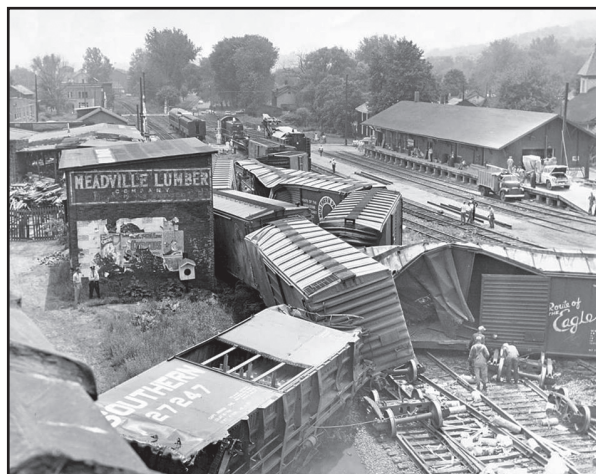
Railfan Photo Extravaganza, and a chance to fire the #611

Oct. 19-20

Tickets \$5 to \$750 - see Strasburg RR website



South side of Meadville Farm & Garden in the 1970's.
Now owned by the FCVRRHS.
- Meadville Farm & Garden photo



Former B&LE depot in background right on June 19, 1962, Erie-Lackawanna wreck in foreground.
- Meadville Tribune photo