

French Creek Valley Railroad Historical Society

P.O. Box 632 Meadville, PA 16335

FALL 2017

Newsletter of the French Creek Valley Railroad Historical Society

Volume 12 Number 2

🚂 VALLEY EXPRESS 🚂

The Rexall Train Visits Meadville

While scanning the photo collection of Stuart Ladner for selections to publish in our calendars, Michael Vickey and your author came across an unusual picture of the front end of an unusual engine sitting in front of the Meadville depot. While there were no details written on the picture, we could read the lettering placed on the front of the streamlined shroud saying The Rexall Train. So, with the click of the Google button, I began a search of this "train". The results were found on a site (<http://www.themetrains.com/rexall-train-timeline.htm>) called **Theme Trains**. There the story of the Rexall train came to life.



Rexall train in Meadville, Sept. 21, 1936
Stuart Ladner photo

A creation of Louis K. Liggett, president of Rexall parent United Drug Co, the train was to be a promotion of their company and their products. Beginning in Boston, MA on March 26, 1936, Liggett wanted to tell America "The Depression will be over soon! Shop at Rexall's!" During the year ending in Atlanta, GA on November 24th, the train travelled nearly every state in the lower forty-eight, with over 2.3 million visitors touring the train.

The blue and white train's consist included a New York Central 4-8-2 steam engine no. 2873, streamlined by the railroad at their West Albany, NY shops, and 12 formerly-retired Pullman cars rebuilt by Pullman's shops in Chicago. The cars included a baggage car equipped with a generator providing power to the entire train, four public display cars, and private cars for serving food, giving lectures to visiting druggists, and the observation car that Liggett resided in during the train's travels. Each community the train stopped and visited was promoted by the local Rexall Drug store/stores in the area. There the citizens could obtain free tickets to visit the display.

Finding this information answered the question of what the train was about, but there was something wrong with the published schedule of the train that year. There was no stop listed for Meadville, and if it was not, why did the train then stop. Was it a short stop for servicing? Something just didn't add up, so in a later conversation with member Ron Stafford, he began looking at **newspapers.com** to see if there

was any answer to this question. His research found two articles from the Record-Argus (Greenville, PA) paper stating the train was to visit Meadville on September 21, 1936. The schedule given on the Theme Trains site was wrong. So I gave Carl Timko the request to see what our friends at the Crawford County Historical Society might have in their archives, and the results were conclusive.

So we now know the details of Stuart Ladner's photo. It was taken on September 21, 1936, and the Rexall Train was paying a visit to Meadville, sponsored by A.L. Ballinger Co. Rexall drug store at the corner of Water and Chestnut Streets. The only thing we did not succeed to find out is who the two men standing in front of streamlined engine are, but they are dressed like Erie officials. Maybe someone will see this picture and identify them.

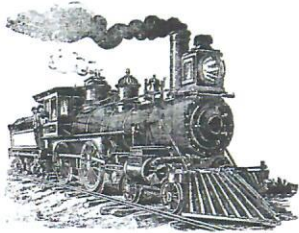
One last note: the Classic Trains Summer 2017 magazine features a fine article about the Rexall Train titled "Prescription for Prosperity". It should still be available from Kalmbach Publishing Company.

-Dennis Mead

Local News

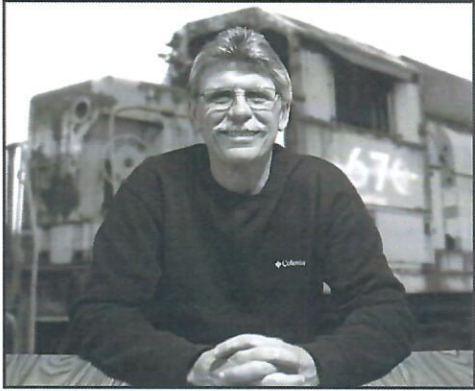
Meadville got a little more interesting when it was revealed at the September membership meeting that John Howell of NIWX (Northern Illinois & Wisconsin) has brought a couple of his locomotives to Meadville, as he promised at his first FCVRRHS membership meeting. The locomotives, NIWX #538 and #539, both B32-8s were former NS units built in October 1989 by GE. They were originally NS #3538 and #3539. NIWX has several loco- motives on lease, for lease and for sale.

- Chris Manning, Carl Timko



From the Stationmaster's Office

As this is being written, Hurricane Harvey has devastated Texas, Irma hit Florida, and Marie slammed the Caribbean. Wildfires rage in California and Montana, and Mexico was hit with earthquakes just before Hurricane Katia hit their northeast coast. Our thoughts and prayers go out to all who have or will be affected by these natural disasters. If we feel isolated from the storms and fires, keep in mind some of these people being affected are railfans and their historical societies. That's one of the great things about us as railroad enthusiasts, we all have an interest in the other guy's efforts. If any of our members would like to help out, contributing to the American Red Cross may be a good place to start.



A big thank you to all the members who have helped out at the display site. The boxcar is close to being completed. We are waiting for the wood for the rest of the siding and the one door. The cabooses was given a coat of wax, and we finally opened it up for business. We have had a few visitors and made some sales and new friends. We are still waiting to hear what it will take to haul the snowplow to Meadville. Don't lose hope, though. It took us six years to get the 518 and two to get the boxcar. We just have to persevere.

Bernie Hanmore

CONTRIBUTIONS & GIFTS

- Olan Wood Products
- Staples Copy & Print
- Gordon Valentine
- Crawford County Historical Society
- Western New York & PA RR
- US Bronze Foundry & Machine
- Bernie Hanmore & Family
- LakeShore Railway Historical Society
- David P. Miller & Family
- David Christoph
- John Snyder & Family
- Cheryl Corp
- Pete Gifford
- Terry Martin & Family
- Chris Myers
- Mike Vickey
- Sherwin-Williams Paint
- Carl Ferguson
- Meadville Tribune
- Bill McComas & Family
- Scott Royer
- Jonathon Gable
- Carl & Vanessa Timko
- John Nagurney
- Ed Cronin & Family
- Rick Rowlands
- Jack Sheets & Family
- Mike Lynch
- Stan Niwa
- Dennis Mead & Family
- Crawford County Convention & Visitors Bureau

There's lots more information as well as interesting photos and stories on our website! Check it out at www.fcrrhs.org



French Creek Valley Express

A Publication of the French Creek Valley Railroad Historical Society

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- Bernie Hanmore - President
- Dennis Mead - Vice President
- Ed Cronin - Treasurer
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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. 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

As of the September membership meeting, the organization is still waiting for a quote from Norfolk Southern for hauling the snowplow 41 miles to an interchange with the WNYP Railroad. Dennis Mead said NS wanted more information, including the center of gravity.

The FCVRRHS submitted an application for the Trains Magazine Preservation Award. The magazine has sent emails twice stating they had received it. Is there a possibility? It would be the organization's best chance to move the snowplow if the award were bestowed upon the FCVRRHS.

Other expenditures this year have included paint for the boxcar and caboose, wood and its processing for the boxcar, wire for the signal and floodlights. Other expenses have or will include the electric bill for the display site, stamps for the newsletters, and extra table fees for the train show in Erie. Dues, donations, and merchandise sales are the main source of income.

A compact disc is now for sale containing the Erie Railroad shop textbook from at least 1916. The user will have to bring up the files individually, as there is no slideshow program embedded. Also, the images are considered as property of the FCVRRHS, so we ask that purchasers of the disc refrain from copying and distributing the information. Discs are available to members for \$40 and to non-members for \$45.

-Carl Timko

Membership

We say goodbye to three members of the FCVRRHS. Tom "Doc" Barratt resigned due to health issues. Tom Collard, the former owner of Tom's Train Terminal also resigned. Mrs. Elaine Bingham passed away recently. Mrs. Bingham became a member after her husband, Bob, passed away. Bob was a member also. The Bingham's had donated a monetary sum to the FCVRRHS to help support the organization. Our condolences go out to Elaine's family.

The FCVRRHS welcomes five new members. Patrick McHale was our

first addition this year. Then John Howell, who owns NIWX, the Northern Illinois & Wisconsin Railway, joined in the summer months. John's company leases and sells locomotives. Some of his locomotives may be seen in the Meadville yard. Blaine and Zeph Lee joined in August thanks to their grandfather, Dan Peterson. All three visited the caboose and display area and were impressed enough to have the two boys join. And Cheryl Corp, who donated some model trains last year, is our newest member.

Welcome aboard to all!

-Carl Timko

History & Archives

The FCVRRHS has accepted donations of railroad memorabilia such as time tables, rule books, and a book or two. These will mostly be kept for reference for the membership. Duplicates may be considered for fund raising.

-Carl Timko

Model Railroad

An ad is being placed with the Meadville Tribune to request donations of model railroad equipment. The organization will be attending the Erie Train Show in November and will need additional equipment to sell to raise funds.

Last year, the FCVRRHS received donations from four individuals. Merchandise, including model trains, is sold during the display of the large HO layout during the span between Thanksgiving and New Years.

Members continue to discuss about touring members' and non-members' layouts. There hasn't been any formal plan as of yet.

-Carl Timko

Museum

The Northwestern Pennsylvania Heritage Partnership's trolley station is complete and open for business. The grand opening was the weekend of June 9 through June 11, with nearly 300 visitors.

All signage is up, the back room has been painted and the display cabinets have been installed. Both restrooms are complete and operational and the ticket office is complete. The basement floor was

removed, a French drain system installed and a new concrete floor poured. Terry Martin has loaned the station a baggage wagon. The only project remaining is replacing the rafter tails, which should be completed soon.

Sandy Porter recruited seven docents to staff the trolley station when open on Saturdays from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

The annual meeting was held on Monday, September 11, at the trolley station. New board members elected were Ken Springirth, Ron Mattocks, and Kevin Parsons. This brings the board membership up to 14. The Volunteer of the Year Award was presented to Sandy Porter. The Parter of the Year went to the Oil Region Alliance, led by Marilyn Black. The Anne Stewart Historical Researcher Award went to Janet Beanland.

Merchandise for sale at the trolley station includes maps, post cards, a historical booklet, and the C.L. Siebert book, "Northwestern Pennsylvania Railway".

Next year, plans are to build a parking lot on the west side of the station and to build a replica of a single-truck city car to be used for birthday parties.

Should you want a personal tour of the station or would like to use the station for a private function, please call Dan at 720-4869, or Sandy at 282-6449.

-Ed Cronin



Property & Equipment

The newest addition to the railroad display site at Pomona Park, in Meadville, is an operating three color signal. The signal was donated to the organization by the Lake Shore Railway Historical Society, and was built by the Union Switch & Signal Co. It is a former Nickel Plate Road signal, but is exactly like the signals used on the Erie Railroad east of Meadville. The signal was installed on Tuesday, August 15. The lens hoods may be shortened so the signals can be seen at a wider angle. Currently, the signal cycles through each color every 70 seconds.

A fifth floodlight was added and the lights repositioned to have a more even lighting on the display.



Signal sans hoods at Pomona Park, Meadville (Photo by Carl Timko)

As of this writing, the status of the DL&W snowplow is still about the same. Contact has finally been made with a Norfolk Southern agent after being informed by the Genesee & Wyoming agent that it was up to NS to make the quote for hauling the snowplow. NS then asked for more information, including the center of gravity of the load on a flat car. Members of the FCVRRHS are frustrated over the fact that it has now been two years since the snowplow was donated to the organization by Growth Resources of Wellsboro, and it hasn't even left Wellsboro yet. Contributions are still being accepted from the public. Donations may be made by sending them to FCVRRHS, P.O. Box 632, Meadville, PA 16335, or by visiting the Society's website, www.fcvrrhs.org and clicking on the Donate button. The fund-raising website at Generosity.com is still active. Search for "DL&W snowplow".

If making out a check, please make a note on the bottom left corner that it is for the Snowplow Fund.

The work on the boxcar is nearly complete. Stan Niwa finished the roof walk and painted it. It is expected that boards for the siding that still need replaced will be sent to the miller by the end of the first week in October. The boards will be painted and installed, leaving only the west side door to be rebuilt and painted.

Rick Rowlands of the Youngtown Steel Heritage Museum brought a brake control valve for the 518. He earlier had donated an engineer's seat, which is being sandblasted, painted and upholstered. Peebles

donated a half mannequin that may be used to portray an engineer in the 518.

The Erie Lackawanna caboose was given a coat of wax and buffed in August. It hasn't looked this good in nearly four years. The caboose is now open for tours on Sundays from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. until less than ideal weather sets in. Plans are to wire the caboose and the 518's headlight.

Depending on when the snowplow arrives, the next project may be the Pennsylvania Railroad tool car. The sides need repaired and we expect to give the car a coat of maintenance-of-way yellow.

- Dennis Mead & Carl Timko



Work crew attaching the signal head to the pole - August 8, 2017
(Photo by Carl Timko)

Public Relations & Education

The caboose at the Pomona Park site reopened to the public in mid-August with hours on Sunday 1 PM to 4 PM. Attendance has been light, but the visitors enjoyed seeing the work we have accomplished this past year on the equipment. No date has been decided on when we will close the site this year. Thanks goes to the volunteers who gave time to man the site.

The next train show in Erie at Waldameer Park will be Sunday, November 5th. We will once again be present at the show with merchandise. If you can help man the table, please let Carl Timko know before the date. The 2018 calendars will be available, as we are just completing the selection of pictures for publication. To date we have collected 26 new photos for use in the next two calendars. The 2018 calendars will be the same price as last year. We are still looking for more pictures, and welcome all that you can find in your collections to allow us to print future calendars.

- Dennis Mead



Kodak to Bring Back Ektachrome

Kodak has announced it is bringing back Ektachrome. Railfans and film enthusiasts should be elated with the return of one Kodak's most popular films. Kodak will produce the film for Super 8 movie film, which will be made, marketed and distributed directly from its Rochester, NY plant. The Professional Ektachrome Slide Film (135-36 frame) will be produced by Kodak Alaris. Both films should be in production by late 2017. Ektachrome was discontinued in 2012.

- www.kodak.com

NIWX Locomotives in Meadville

As seen in the photo below, new member John Howell's NIWX has made its presence in Meadville with two former NS B32-8s, #538 and #539. Both were built in October 1989 for the NS as #3538 and #3539. The NIWX stands for Northern Illinois & Wisconsin Railway. NIWX is a locomotive sales and leasing company, with offices outside of Edinboro, PA.



NIWX B32-8 #539, formerly NS #539,nee-NS #3539 with WNYP C424 #421 at Meadville 9/27/2017
(Photo by Carl Timko)

Departure of Jerry Jacobson

We lost a major name in railroading and railfandom on Wednesday, September 13, 2017. Jerry Jacobson, known for starting the Ohio Central, building the Age of Steam Roundhouse and running excursions using steam locomotives, passed at the age of 74. Jerry amassed a collection of steam locomotives, 28 diesel locomotive, passenger cars and freight cars. Jerry at one time considered buying the Bessemer and Lake Erie Railroad 2-10-4 #643, a Texan deep in the hearts of many Bessemer fans. Jerry took over ten failing lines in Ohio and turned them into money making ventures until he decided to retire and sell the company to Genesee & Wyoming. It was after the divestiture of the OC that he started planning and building the Age of Steam Roundhouse in Sugar Creek, Ohio. The roundhouse is not open to the public, rather to large groups requesting a tour on Saturdays. It is hoped that his collection and the roundhouse is around for a long time.

Circus Train Car Dispositions

In the Spring 2017 issue, the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus was wrapping up its last circus and hauling its last train. Feld Entertainment, who owns the circus, put all the rail equipment up for auction. Bidders were to place their bids by March 10. A search on the internet for the dispositions of the circus cars was successful in that a relatively few number of the cars were found to have new homes. Some interesting stories went along with the acquisitions, but that won't be the focus of this article.

- Brian Miser of Peru, Indiana acquired a 5 bedroom sleeper, built in 1949 for the Pennsylvania Railroad. Ringling Brothers bought it in 1991. Mr. Miser is Ringling's former "Human Cannonball" and will use the car as a guest house. No car number was revealed in any of the stories on the internet.

- Car #40003, also known as RBBX #57, was sent to the Showpeople's

Winter Quarters Park in Seffner, Florida to be used as a community center. The car was used as the Red unit Trainmaster's Quarters. It was built by American Car & Foundry in 1955 as Union Pacific #5453. It was sold to Ringling Brothers in 1972.

- The Circus World Museum in Baraboo, Wisconsin acquired clown car #189 from the Blue unit train.

- The Roanoke, Virginia NRHS chapter has acquired an eight bedroom car and plans to convert it to an office car for volunteers.

- Located at the Depot @ Doolittles in or near DuBois, PA, Dr. Jeff Rice acquired two cars, one being the former Ringmaster's car. They are to be converted into a bed and breakfast to go along with the fourteen cabooses and at least one Plymouth locomotive (#29). This information is from WTAJ-TV.

- RBBX #41307 went to a consortium that includes Borden-Black and Nelson McGahee, Dave and Jean Reppy, and Charles and Kathy Pultz. The car is a 6 apartment car that was built by Budd in 1949 as a 21 roomette sleeper for the Pennsylvania Railroad, as the #8267. It was also named "Lewistown Inn". The car will be converted back into a sleeper and is currently stored at the C.P. Huntington Railroad Historical Society.

- The Erie Lackawanna Dining Car

Preservation Society of Dunmore (Scranton), PA received three Ringling Brothers cars, two sleepers and an elephant car from the Blue unit train. The cars are former Union Pacific sleepers that were converted to bunk cars. One of them became an eleven room double bunk car while the other became a 14 room single bunk car. One of the cars carried the #176 badge on its side, which did not reflect its actual car number. The cars will be used to house students of the Arts or Fire Festival that is held at the Scranton Iron Furnace.

So far, that is the extent of the dispositions of cars. It was mentioned in a post online that unsold cars will likely be scrapped.

- Carl Timko

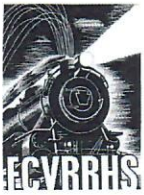
October Membership Meeting

Any member that hasn't been to the Cambridge Springs Trolley Station will have the opportunity to visit the station on Thursday, October 19, 2017 at 6:30 p.m. The trolley station is located just off U.S. Routes 6 and 19 in Cambridge Springs if you plan to attend the membership meeting. With the station nearly complete, this will be a good chance to see the renovations first hand. See you there!

- Carl Timko



Terry Martin lifting the signal with his backhoe. (Photo by Carl Timko)



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



The Bessemer 80412

**French Creek Valley Railroad Historical Society
Calendar of Events - Fall 2017**

Oct. 8 - Buffalo Falling Leaves Train Show
Polish Falcons, 4555 Columbia Ave., Depew, NY
10AM to 3PM

Oct. 12-15 NMRA Mid-Eastern Region Convention
Sheraton Harrisburg-Hershey Hotel, Harrisburg, PA;
Registration at door: *NMRA members: \$59;*
non-members: \$69; clinics and tours-extra fees

Oct. 22 - Autumn on the Southern Tier Train Show
Olean Intermediate/Middle School,
401 Wayne St., Olean, NY; 10AM to 3PM

Oct. 29 - Castle Shannon Train Show & Rail Event
Fire Dept. of Castle Shannon, 3600 Library Rd.,
Castle Shannon, PA; 9AM to 3PM; \$7 admission

Nov. 2-4 - Fine Scale Model Railroader Expo 2017
Blair Co. Convention Center, Altoona, PA
www.modelrailroadexpo.com

Nov. 4 - Cleveland 2-Rail O Scale Train Show
Lakeland Community College, Kirtland, OH;
9AM to 2PM; Admission: \$7

Nov. 4 - How to Build a Layout
Lakeland Community College, Kirtland, OH;
9AM to 2PM; Admission: Free

Nov. 5 - Erie Train Show
Rainbow Gardens, Waldameer Park, Erie, PA
10AM to 4PM; Admission: \$5

Nov. 5 - Model Training Day
NMRA MCR Div.4 - Black River Landing &
Transportation Center, 421 Black River Lane, Lorain, OH;
11AM to 4PM; Admission: Free

Nov. 4,5 - Excursion - Everett RR 2-6-0 #11
Photo charter on Hollidaysburg, Claysburg,
and Martinsburg branches; night photo session.



View of the 3-color signal from the cabin of the whatever. (See Pages 3-4)

THE FINEST TRAIN IN THE WORLD! • • • the FOUR CARS OF EXPERTS PATTERSON CENTURY OF PROGRESS ARTISTS!

MILLION DOLLAR REXALL TRAIN
IN MEADVILLE
ALL DAY MONDAY
SEPTEMBER 21st

Thru to the Wonder Trains of the Century

IT'S ALL FREE

EVERYBODY IS INVITED TO INSPECT THIS SUPER-LINER
Tell Your Friends! • • • It's a Sight You Must Not Miss!

The Rexall Train is the only one of its kind in the world. Attended by its entire staff equipped with the latest conveniences of transportation, with one such as a mobile drop step and a small research laboratory of botany and educational features. Visit constantly in the shade of Pine Knoll and Earth. Months long open to enjoyment at the right of Knox Ave. Free from the large bank of groups suspended from the exciting world of the world's finest train.

ASK US FOR FREE TICKETS!

A. L. BALLINGER CO.
THE REXALL TRAIL SERVICE
WATER A CREEK ST.

Newspaper advertisement for the Rexall Train September 19, 1936

(See Page 1)