

French Creek Valley Railroad
Historical Society

P.O. Box 632 Meadville, PA 16335



FALL 2011

Newsletter of the French Creek Valley Railroad Historical Society

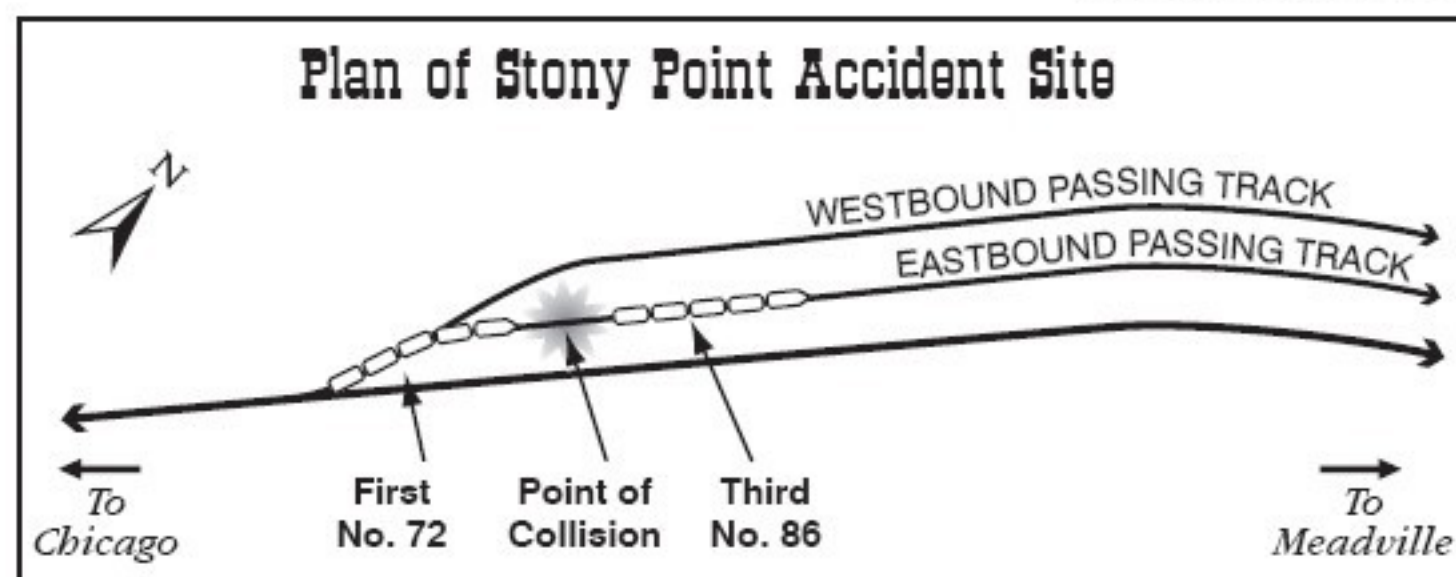
Volume 6 Number II

VALLEY EXPRESS

Remembering a Train Wreck At Stony Point, PA

It was a foggy night on February 14, 1926 when eastbound Erie freight train Third No. 86 pulled into the eastbound passing track at Stony Point. It was 5:10 AM when the train was into the clear on the siding. At the time of arrival at Stony Point, dense fog restricted vision to about one car length. Eastbound Third No. 86, pulled by engine 4207 and consisting of 47 cars and a caboose, had passed Atlantic Station at 4:44 AM and was to wait in the siding for the passing of westbound passenger train No. 3 from Meadville. Upon arrival into the passing track, the engineer and his head brakeman went from the cab of the locomotive to the Stony Point tower. Shortly afterwards, the tower operator received a call from the Second Meadville Division dispatcher inquiring as to whether any of the crew of Third No.86 was there in the office. Then the dispatcher issued orders wanting one of the crew members to direct eastbound Erie freight First No. 72 into the westbound passing siding, but the crew took no action. Then the dispatcher called shortly after that and issued instructions to Third No.86 to double its head end in the westbound passing track, whereupon the engineer told the operator there was not sufficient time to do this prior to the arrival of westbound No. 3. He then suggested that he be permitted to proceed to the east end of the passing track and then go to Meadville ahead of First No. 72. The engineer felt this arrangement would avoid delay of train No. 3. The engineer then told his head brakeman to stay in the office in case the dispatcher issued instructions for their train to proceed and then to come to the engine and let him know he could pull ahead as far as the east switch. In the meantime, eastbound Erie freight train First No. 72, pulled by engine No. 4129 and consisting of 53 cars and a caboose, had departed Shenango at 4:40 AM. The crew had received a copy of train order 19, Form 31, which read: " No.3 Engine 2920 will wait at Stony Point until five-forty 5:40 AM for 1st No. 72 engine 4129". At Atlantic Station orders are normally issued to eastbound trains letting them know that the eastbound passing track at Stony Point, 5.1 miles ahead, is occupied and that the westbound passing track was to be used. On this particular night when First No. 72 passed the station, it received no such orders even though the dispatcher had unsuccessfully attempted to transmit information to the crew that the eastbound passing track was occupied. Upon arrival at Stony Point, the crew of First No. 72 found very foggy conditions.

(continued on page 5)



Local Update



Excursion Train Visit - Area rail buffs were treated to a rare visit by an excursion train, pulled by two E8's, originating out of Hoboken, NJ in early August. Operating over the ex-Erie Railroad to Youngstown, OH, the private passenger car train stopped in Cambridge Springs for dinner at the hotel and later for the night in Meadville. Early on Sunday August 7, the train took a side trip to Franklin, PA before being hauled back to Meadville by WNYP Alco's, and continuing on to Youngstown, Pittsburgh, and Philly. Built in 1951-52 for the PRR by the EMD of General Motors, the PRR-painted E8 diesels are owned by Bennett Levin- owner of the Pacific Ltd/ High Iron Travel Excursion. Mr. Levin has a history of supporting wounded vets with free trips to ball games for example.

The long time resident GE center-cab diesel switcher sited in Meadville's 5th Ward has reportedly been sold to Mr. Glen Campbell and friends of McKees Rocks, PA. Former owner Economic Progress Alliance had used the unit to shift goods from the WNY&P Main to Avtex. Attempts by Loyd Mitchell and Jim Cray to start the unit last year were unsuccessful due to dead batteries, and the former Navy unit has since been marooned on a single track panel awaiting removal.



From the Stationmaster's Office

The past six months has proven to be one of the most productive periods in a long time. Work has been progressing on the 518 at a very fast pace - the fastest since the project began. We brought together a team of volunteers this year that has successfully dismantled the switcher as if they were professional locomotive scrappers. As I write this column, the 518 remains in Jefferson, Ohio - minus many of its former appliances, as well as exterior features such as handrails and pilot steps. All that is left to remove is the prime mover, generator and air compressor.



It was hoped that the engine would be moved to Meadville by the time of this publication, but at this point we are stalled. Ed Cronin has worked many hours locating riggers and haulers. In the past weeks we have had everyone involved lined up to begin the movement, only to have one of the parties back out. We are not giving up, though. It is our hope to have the engine on the display track before the end of the year. It's just that close to happening.

Another bright spot in this period of time is the completion and printing of our first Society calendar. I am happy to say we are receiving rave reviews from those who have bought their calendars. We have actually ordered a second run printed because they are selling so well. If you have not seen one yet, you can contact Carl Timko, or simply stop by Tom's Train Terminal to review and purchase your copy.

At this time I would like to wish everyone a great Thanksgiving, as well as a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Dennis Mead

CONTRIBUTIONS & GIFTS

- Weber Electric Supply
- Staples Copy & Print
- Lloyd's Rental & Sales
- Crawford County Historical Society
- Tom's Train Terminal
- Western New York & PA RR
- Susi Building Supplies
- US Bronze Foundry & Machine
- AC & J RR, Jefferson, OH
- LakeShore Railway Historical Society
- Bob Bingham family
- Bill McComas Family
- Carl Timko Family
- Anne W. Stewart
- Tom Collard Family
- Ed Cronin Family
- Pipp Graphics & Design
- Jack Sheets Family
- Joe Mazzone
- Moss Family

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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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 and Finance

It is that time of year when dues are due. Second notices will go out shortly.

I expect by the time you get this newsletter the 518 fund will be down to zero. We still have a ways to go on the locomotive project, so if there is any way you can send us an additional \$5 or \$10 to help with the project, it would be greatly appreciated.

-Ed Cronin

Membership

The current membership now totals 64 members. New members include – Jason Ferguson, Michael Chmura, and Jim Pettengill. Pettengill is a 1968 Allegheny College graduate writer and photographer. He is the current VP of the Ridgeway Railroad Museum in Colorado. (www.ridgewayrailroadmuseum.org). Jim's great-grandfather, Frank Brown, was a locomotive engineer for the A&GW, then Erie (based in Meadville), then Buffalo, Rochester & Pittsburgh. His career as an engineer encompassed the years 1870 to 1910. **WELCOME ABOARD!**

We were saddened to learn that friend and visitor Henry Grund had passed away. Henry was renowned for having a railroad signal lit on his property and regularly changing the aspect. We were also sorry to hear that Ed Shaw has had to drop his membership due to ill health.

-Ed Cronin

Museum

We have a home for the museum! As you may know, the Economic Progress Alliance purchased the 84 Lumber property this spring. Universal Well Services is now leasing much of the 8-acre parcel on the west side of Bessemer St. In August, members of the Railroad and Tooling Museum Board met with the Board of the Alliance, presented a short program about our plans for the museum, and then asked them to donate the 1.5-acre parcel on the east side of Bessemer St. to us. After some discussion, they voted to offer us the property for a nominal amount -

payable when we begin construction. Until that time the Alliance will maintain the property and pay the insurance and taxes. Needless to say we are quite pleased with their offer. Not only do we have a home for our project, but we also have an asset we can use as matching funds, should public or private grants become available.

We are in the early stages of a financial feasibility study to be conducted by Karen Petrucelli of KP Consulting. As you may know, Karen was the capital campaign consultant for the Yolanda G. Barco Oncology Institute as well as the Linesville Senior Center. She knows the town and is held in very high esteem by those who have worked with her. The study should be completed by January and will indicate if we have sufficient support in the community to begin the capital campaign to raise \$2,500,000 for the project. If the answer is "yes" then we will begin with the "Silent Phase" of the campaign. That will take place from January 2012 through December 2013 and should raise well over 80% of the money. If we are on track, construction would begin during the summer of 2013. The "Public Phase" will be conducted from January 2014 until opening day for the museum, which is planned for May 1, 2015.

"Good things come to those who wait!"

-Ed Cronin

Model Railroad

As of mid-September, the N-Scale Club Layout bench-work @ the Bank in Meadville has been completed. The foam base and track have been laid out. Next up we will begin working on the tunnel, shaping the foam and affixing the track. At that point we will hook up the power to make sure everything runs smoothly. Then we can begin the scenery and buildings. There's a lot of work to be done to get the layout ready for the holiday season.

Bench-work has started on the Club's larger layouts. The design calls for the bench-work to be constructed in sections that can be bolted together. The HO layout will be about 32 inches high with the N-Scale layout above it at about 58 inches.

The tricky part of this project is building free-standing bench-work that is not secured to the floor or walls as requested by our landlord. As of now, 15-feet of bench-work has been built. By the time you read this, much additional progress will have been made. Once the main base has been built, we will attach 2x4 up-rights to the backside of the base. Brackets will be attached to the up-rights to support the N-Scale layout.

If you have not joined our club, what are you waiting for? Come on down and get in on the fun. If you have never built a home layout, now is a great time to come down and help us out on building the bench-work. You will pick up many ideas while helping build our model railroad.

-Scott Wilson

At the September 2nd Friday Bull Session, members and guests suggested possible "how-to" seminars and other programs for the coming year. Over the next few weeks I will be contacting potential speakers or presenters to see what can be arranged. As scheduling progresses, information will be E-mailed to FCVRRHS members, model railroad club members, and to others who may be interested.

This Fall, I will be building a small Lionel layout in my store. For the last two years I just had an O-27 oval on top of the old safe. This year the railroad will be smaller but will be right in the store and, as time goes by, scenery will be added including some Laser Art buildings and scenery from Woodland Scenics and others. The goal will be to show Lionel owners some techniques to move from "toy trains" to model railroading. There will be shelving underneath for inventory and it will be high enough to save train and scenery from curious little hands. The FCV display of model boxcars has been temporarily moved into the store to prevent damage during construction of the model railroad layout by the club. For those who have not seen the display, it allows comparison of G, O, S, HO, TT, N and Z scales quite effectively using seven 40' Erie boxcar examples - one for each scale.

-Tom Collard

Special Events / Programs

N-scaler Scott Wilson recently conducted a scenery clinic at the Bank shopping center on Park Avenue. The event was attended by seven modelers who learned several techniques using natural wild plants and one from a boxed kit. Materials



Scott Wilson Conducting a Scenics Clinic

used included several different hues of Woodland Scenics ground foam, one made by Bachmann, and another by Scenic Express. Other materials used were 3M Super 77 spray adhesive, Aquanet hair spray (for sealing), floral tape, and a can of semi-gloss enamel (to darken the tree). Wild plants used were ironweed, and sedum, plus one other that wasn't identified.

-Dan Higham & Carl Timko

Public Relations

As mentioned in the President's Column, the Society's first calendar has been printed and released. The calendar features Erie Railroad photos from the Stuart Ladner Collection. Most of the photos have never been published or seen before. His collection offers a fascinating view of the railroad up to the early 1950's, and features pictures of locomotives, railroad employees, and scenes along the railroad. The calendar sells for \$12.00, with the proceeds dedicated to the 518 Project. Sales have been quite brisk, so I would suggest you not wait too

long to purchase yours.

The Erie, PA Railroadiana and Model Train Show is Sunday, November 6th. We will once again have a table there, selling T-shirts and calendars. Stop by and say hi, if you can.

The Society will be hosting the Erie Lackawanna Historical Society Spring meeting here in Meadville on Saturday, May 5th, 2012. The meeting and dinner will be held at the Country Club, with guest speaker to be Carl Belke of the Western New York and Pennsylvania Railroad. The option of a train trip is being looked into. Further details will be released sometime early next year and will be sent to you at that time.

-Dennis Mead

History & Archives

Work on the Cambridge Springs Trolley Station is on hold after a setback involving a gas line rupture. This year marks the 100th anniversary of the facility's opening.

In other news the Erie Times recently reported that a sesquicentennial celebration was planned for 2013 to celebrate the Battle of Gettysburg. Plans include building a \$2 million period locomotive and coaches in Illinois that meet today's design standards to recognize the history of the Northern Central Railway and Civil War in York County. Steam Into History, Inc. reports that the project will include building turntables at New Freedom and Hanover Junction, an engine house, and repair of track between part of the Heritage Rail Trail County Park. Backers point out that Lincoln traveled thru here to deliver the Gettysburg Address and on his funeral train two years later. If the York No. 17 Civil War era steamer can be completed by spring, it will also participate in a rerun of the "Great Locomotive Chase" in Georgia, in which Union raiders captured a locomotive in 1862 before being caught by Rebs.

-Pete Gifford

Property & Equipment

After many trips to Jefferson, OH, to dismantle the Alco S2 #518 and otherwise prepare it for shipment to Meadville, Society volunteers will have to bide their time once again until the transfer of the unit to Pomona Park can be accomplished - hopefully before the end of the year. On completion of the transfer the unit will be "cocooned" for sand-blasting and painting. In anticipation of the Alco's arrival, the caboose was temporarily shifted south and the northern track panel was re-ballasted to level the two panels. Although many members deserve thanks for helping with the project, Terry Martin and Stan Niwa deserve special recognition for their leadership and skills displayed in



Terry Martin measures battery boxes removed from Alco S2 #518.



Stan and Terry size up removal of compressor from #518

dismantling the Alco. By the Spring issue of this newsletter we may hope to admire a newly painted S2 in Erie livery alongside its consort- caboose 365- as we motor along Meadville's arterial highway.

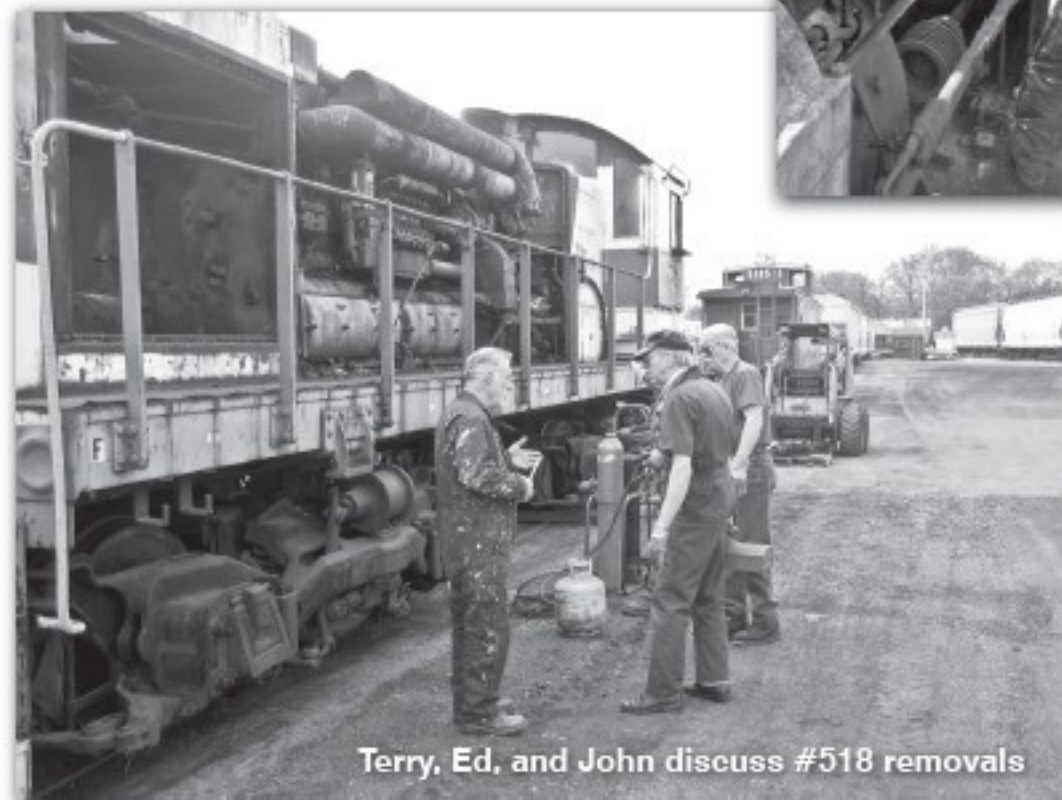
Additionally, the Erie Railroad coal tower diamond has been stabilized and is now set up for viewing at the caboose.

-Al Reibel & Jack Sheets

Terry persuades an obstinate bolt



Stan Niwa burns a stubborn item off the #518



Terry, Ed, and John discuss #518 removals



Prez Denny removes relays and contacts from Alco cab

(continued from page 1)

The head Brakeman stepped down from the engine and opened the west switch of the eastbound passing track, and then as an extra precaution, walked ahead to the west switch of the westbound passing track to make sure it was properly closed. Assuming the eastbound passing track was clear, he then returned to the engine. Moments after the engineer of Third No.86 had left the tower to go back to his engine, the engine of First No. 72 hit the rear of his train. The resulting collision crushed the wooden caboose of Third No. 86 on impact. The wreckage then caught on fire and spread to the car ahead of it, destroying it. Engine 4129 was only slightly damaged, as the estimated speed of the collision was between 5 and 6 mph. Sadly though, the conductor, middle brakeman, and the end flagman were killed in the accident.

On March 30, 1926 the Interstate Commerce Commission issued File No. 1247 Accident Investigation

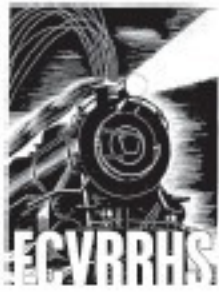
Report. In its findings, it reported the description of the Second District of the Meadville Division between Meadville, PA and Kent, OH. They describe the location of the accident, the trains, and their crews, and summarize the evidence taken from those involved. In the end they conclude the accident was caused by "failure of the crew of train Third No. 86 to take proper precautions for the safety of their train in view of the existing weather conditions". In particular, the Head Brakeman was cited for failure to

carry out his orders given to him by the operator. It was not his duty to raise any questions as to how the Dispatcher was running the railroad.

Another thing that will never be fully understood is why the caboose crew of Third No. 86 never stepped off the caboose to proceed forward looking over the train. Were they asleep in the caboose, or did they assume the following train was heading in on the westbound passing track? I guess we will never know.



Engine 4129 of Eastbound Erie Freight First No. 72



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Railroad Historical Society
P.O. Box 632
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Alco S2 #518

French Creek Valley Railroad Historical Society
Tentative Program & Events Schedule

Fall 2010

Erie Railroadiana
Rainbow Gardens in Erie

Nov. 6

Christmas Layout in Meadville
Downtown Mall

TBA

Second Fridays Bull Session @ the Bank
940 Park Avenue in Meadville



John and Ed unload relays & contacts

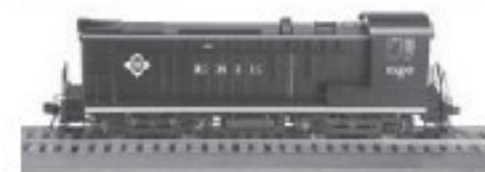
TOM'S TRAIN TERMINAL

Model Railroad Headquarters
and Supplies for Artists

@ the bank

940 Park Avenue, Meadville, PA

(814) 853-2942



Join other Railroad and
Model Railroad enthusiasts
for an informal "Bull Session"
at Tom's Train Terminal on the
second Friday of each month!

*Free Off-Street Parking
Across the Street*