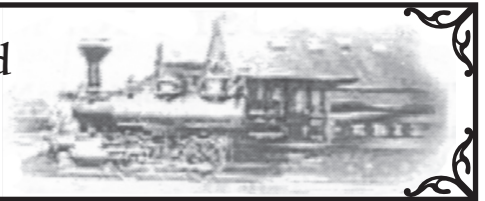


# French Creek Valley Railroad Historical Society

P.O. Box 632 Meadville, PA 16335



SPRING 2018

Newsletter of the French Creek Valley Railroad Historical Society

Volume 13 Number 1

# VALLEY EXPRESS

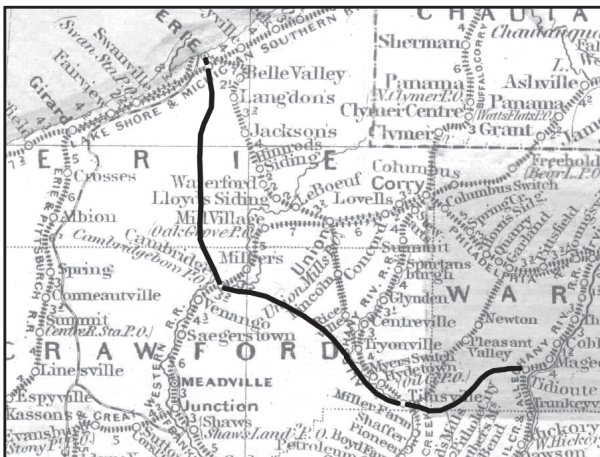
## The Pennsylvania Petroleum Railroad

By Dennis Mead and Pete Gifford

### *Developing the Pennsylvania Petroleum Railroad*

In the beginning the Atlantic & Great Western (A&GW) Railroad claimed supremacy in the oil region of Pennsylvania. With the Oil Creek Railroad from Titusville connecting the A&GW at Corry and the Franklin Branch from Meadville to Oil City, it had a rail loop that encompassed the entire oil-producing area in the early 1860s. But, by 1864 the railroad lost their control of this profitable traffic when the Pennsylvania Central Company took possession of the Oil Creek line, dividing the oil business with its new competitor. Now the management needed to restore that supremacy again, and to accomplish this, they proposed the creation of the Pennsylvania Petroleum Railroad (PPRR) in 1871.

Chartered in 1872 the proposed route would be constructed from Cambridge Springs east to Titusville then continue on to Tidioute. The company also intended to first, lease, then purchase the Pithole Valley Railway, a line that ran from Oleopolis on the Allegheny River to Pithole, and construct a 2-mile extension north to connect it with the mainline at a point near Pleasantville called Colorado Junction. (Colorado Junction apparently got its name from the nearby Colorado Hills oil fields.) The second part of the project was building the line from Cambridge north through Edinboro to Port of Erie. The third and last part of the proposal was to lease and later purchase the Shenango & Allegheny Railroad. This rail line connected to the AG&W at Greenville and travelled south to the coal mines at Pardoe, north of Grove City. This line traversed one of the richest mineral districts in the US at that time.



A&GW management felt after all this they could then purchase the PPRR, as well as the Cleveland & Mahoning Railroad which they had leased since October 1, 1863, giving them once again command of the oil and mineral traffic in the region.

*(continued on page 5)*

### A Note of Appreciation

The French Creek Valley Railroad Historical Society would like to once again thank everyone who made the holiday layout displays at the old Kmart building. Everything came together to make this season the best the organization has ever had. The funds we raised will go towards bringing our Delaware Lackawanna & Western Russell snowplow home to Meadville.

Special thanks to Brian MacMurray and Meadville Medical Center for letting us use the Kmart building to display our three layouts and sell our merchandise. We appreciate that these people were open to the suggestion and had enough trust in us to treat their property with respect.

Thank you to Holbrook Tool and Mold who lent us their box truck so that we could haul the merchandise to the Kmart building. Thank you to Coldwell Banker who lent us their box truck, at a moment's notice, when the other truck broke down. Thank you to Lloyd's Rental for providing the mobile sign, free of charge, so that we could attract and direct the public to the Kmart building. Thank you to our advertising associates, Meadville Tribune, WICU-TV, WJET-TV, Cool 101.7, WMVL-FM radio. Thanks to Stan and Debbie Niwa for advertising the display on FYI Crawford County. This was a huge boost in advertising. Thank you to all who attended whether purchases were made or not. You helped get the word out about where our display was this season.

*(continued on page 5)*



## From the Stationmaster's Office

This should be an exciting year for the French Creek Valley Railroad Historical Society. We will complete the restoration of the B&LE boxcar. All we have to do is repair and paint the door. We plan to install electricity in the caboose and wire the headlight on the 518.

But the big news is that after over two years, we will finally have the DL&W snowplow hauled to Meadville! The tenacity of our membership paid off with communication to the right people at the right time. The snowplow will be loaded and hauled by the Norfolk Southern and interchanged with the WNYP Railroad. The WNYP will take it to Olean and unload it, then bring it down to Meadville on its own wheels. We are hoping for a mid-Spring delivery. We will need all available hands to help prepare the lot for the new display track.

Merchandise sales over the holiday season were outstanding, thanks to the participating members and Meadville Medical Center, who graciously let us use the empty Kmart building. This is what happens when we all come together to get things done. It's one of the great attributes of the FCVRRHS; that is its membership.

*Bernie Hanmore*



## 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.

## CONTRIBUTIONS & GIFTS

- Ben Bartlett
- CCCVB
- CMR Products
- David Christoph
- Coldwell Banker
- Ed Cronin family
- Dave Ellis family
- Carl Ferguson
- Bernie Hanmore family
- Dan Higham family
- Cool 101.7 FM
- Greg Hindle
- Holbrook Tool & Mold
- Scott Ladner family
- Lloyd's Rentals
- Brian MacMurray
- Chris Manning family
- Terry Martin family
- Bill McComas family
- Dennis Mead and family
- Meadville Medical Center
- Paige Minick
- Chris Myers
- Stan Niwa family
- Olan Wood Products
- Pipp Graphics & Design
- Sandy Porter
- Jack Sheets family
- John Snyder family
- Carl and Vanessa Timko
- Karen Waylan
- WNYP RR

There's lots more information as well as interesting photos and stories on our website! Check it out at [www.fcvrrhs.org](http://www.fcvrrhs.org)



## Budget & Finance

Sales at the November Erie Train Show and the holiday layout display at Kmart in Meadville were outstanding! The sales at Kmart were in large part due to location. There was ample room to display three layouts, plus have several of our own tables for the merchandise, along with use of the former customer service counter. The Kmart building is unlikely to be available in November, but lessons were learned from this experience.

- Carl Timko

## History & Archives

Sadly, the Meadville Tribune announced that Meadville Farm & Garden is closing its doors after 49 years in business in the former Bessemer & Lake Erie Railroad freight depot off of Mead Avenue in Meadville. The Mattocks family of 5M Milling started in 1969, after buying the business from Oliver and Becky Brock. Conversations with employees confirmed the closing as of Saturday, February 24. Not only was the Meadville store affected, but all of the stores in Waterford, Albion, and Titusville. All those who farmed, gardened, or bought pet supplies from the Mattocks Five company will miss the business greatly. It is too early yet to determine what will happen with the freight depot, which was built by the Pittsburgh Bessemer & Lake Erie Railroad in the 1890s.

An addition one correction is necessary regarding the article in the Spring 2017 issue of the *Valley Express*. The article "The Circus Came to Meadville One Last Time", didn't state how the circus train came to Meadville on July 11, 1956. The circus had performed in Erie and traveled to Meadville for its next show. However, the reader was left assuming that it somehow came down the Erie Railroad. Thanks to Wayne Cole's book *Ghost Rails XIV: Hallowed Grounds*, that is not true. A photo on page 72 shows the Bessemer with two shiny SD7s bringing the circus train into Meadville while crowds stood trackside and watched.

- Carl Timko

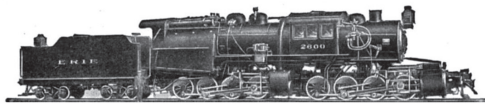
## Membership

Since the last issue was printed, we have two new members. Welcome aboard John Nicola and Bryan Bechler! John is from Townville and signed up at the layout display in the Kmart building. Bryan hails from Granite Falls, Washington, and signed up as a Life Member.

Membership dues will be due at the end of June. The price is still the same.

Sadly, we announce the final departure of one of our former members. Elmore "Cootie" Harris passed away on January 6, 2018 at the age of 94. "Cootie" was a well-known jazz musician, martial arts instructor and supporter of the arts. So long, Cootie.

- Carl Timko



## Model Railroad

The holiday layout display and sales at Kmart were so good, we even sold both of the layouts that we had. That includes the large HO layout that the FCVRRHS has displayed and operated for many years. The other was donated to the organization and was a simple, but intriguing little HO layout.

The impetus in the committee now is to build a new layout; more correctly, modules of a layout. Examples of different types of construction are still being looked at. One way is to build the modules according to NMRA standards. Another way is to build them in the manner that the I-80 Group's modules are built. Scott Wilson, Aric and Brian Hartle brought two N scale modules up to the February meeting to demonstrate the modules and show the members how they were built. These particular modules were built by Masterpiece Modules, ([www.masterpiecemodule.com](http://www.masterpiecemodule.com)) who only builds them in N and Z scales. It is thought that a similar construction technique could be used to build HO modules. Modular construction will lessen the weight and bulkiness, a major factor when hauling a layout down flights of stairs and loading

them in a truck or trailer. Modules will also cut the time considerably when assembling or disassembling a layout.

- John Snyder, I-80 Group, Carl Timko

## Museum

I am pleased to report that because of the generosity of our members, as well as community supporters, our treasury balance is higher than it has ever been. It didn't hurt that our sales during the Christmas display were the best ever also. Thank you for your support!

At last, Norfolk Southern has provided a quotation to move the snow plow! It is thousands of dollars less than what it would have cost us to move the plow by truck. Well done, VP Dennis Mead, for your hard work in making this happen. Paperwork has been completed to establish an account with Western New York and Pennsylvania to prepare for expenses related to moving the snow plow. It is anticipated that we will see the plow in Meadville before summer.

You may know that the former Bessemer & Lake Erie Station in Meadville is for sale. We believe the project to acquire it is feasible. An opportunity like this won't come again in our lifetime.

### *The Trolley Station in Cambridge Springs*

Saturday, April 7, 2018 will be opening day for the Trolley Station. It will be open every Saturday from April 7 through October 27 from 12:00 noon until 4:00 PM.

Our newly formed National Model Railroad Association Division will be meeting at the Trolley Station at least twice this spring. Other activities include a pit stop for a car rally sponsored by the Oil Region Alliance on Saturday, June 23, and an open house and possibly a car show during the annual Cambridge Springs Fireman's Carnival July 25-28.

Private tours of the trolley station are available by contacting Dan Higham at 814-720-4869 or Sandy Porter at 814-282-6449. It is also available for private parties or organizational meetings. Dan or Sandy can schedule your event.

- Ed Cronin

## Property and Equipment

Completion of the B&LE boxcar restoration should begin this spring, as soon as the weather is warmer. The door is the main project. The wood is to be planed, then mounted in the frame that Stan Niwa has been busily repairing. Then it gets painted and mounted on the boxcar. Other work on the boxcar may include removing the maintenance-of-way steps and some touch-up work.

Plans are to wire up the caboose for interior lighting and outlets. While that is being done, the #518 may get its front headlight wired up for a lower wattage lamp.



DL&W Russell snowplow #95904;  
soon to be on display in Meadville.  
- FCVRRHS file photo

The DL&W snowplow's transport to Meadville will be starting the week of May 7. Dennis Mead announced the news to the board the second week of February. After two and a half years, everything came together to finally arrange the transport. The plan is to load the snowplow on a TTX flatcar at Wellsboro Junction, tie it down, then move it via the Wellsboro & Corning Railroad to Corning, interchange it with the Norfolk Southern, who will transport it to Hornell, where the Western New York & Pennsylvania will then pick up the car and haul it to Olean where it will be unloaded. The snowplow will then be hauled on its own wheels to Meadville where it will be moved onto a display track on the new lot across from the Pomona Park display.

- Dennis Mead, Carl Timko

## Public Relations & Education

Since the last issue of the *Valley Express* in the Fall, we have had two train shows at Rainbow Gardens in Erie, plus the Christmas layout display featured at the former Kmart here in Meadville. Sales at the

November train show and the Christmas train display were very good, in part to the donated train items the public has given us for fundraising. In addition, we sold the main train layout we have displayed for many years, along with another layout donated to us some time ago. Besides the trains and accessories we had for sale, we ran out of the 2018 calendars, ordered a second run and sold those out as well.

Sadly, the sales at the train show this past March in Erie were not as robust as in the past. I am told by several others there that the entire show was a bit slower than usual, so the hope is we will do better at this coming fall show. Thanks to all those who helped man these events. John Snyder was named the Salesman of the Year at the Christmas layout display. Good job, John!

When the weather allows us, we will get back to working on our displays at Pomona Park, and hopefully, will reopen the caboose to the public again. In addition, we will be seeing the arrival of the snow plow this summer. This should increase the number of visitors two-fold.

- Dennis Mead

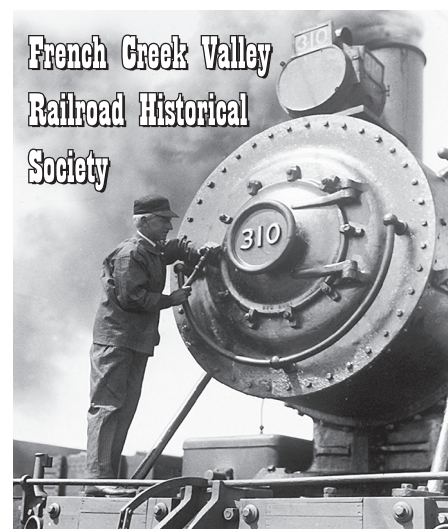
We expect to have a nice selection of photos for the 2019 calendar. Scott Woods of the Greenville Railroad Park donated a cd containing 185 photos of scenes along the Meadville Conneaut Lake & Linesville branch of the Bessemer & Lake Erie. Plan to get your calendar early this fall.

- Carl Timko



Board member John Snyder presenting the HO train set to raffle winner Greg Hindel of Conneaut Lake, PA. The raffle benefited the local Toys for Tots campaign.

- Photo: Jonathon Gable



## Special Events & Programs

Besides the train shows listed on page six of this issue, one event that may take place in May is the transport of the DL&W snowplow #95904. Members are planning to photograph its journey from Olean, NY to Meadville. It will be likely to be towed behind a WNYP locomotive. Those that are members and have email will know about it first. If there is enough time, we will contact local media outlets to notify all who may be interested in watching the #95904's journey.



FCVRRHS president Bernie Hanmore presenting a check to Melody Bush, representing the Crawford County chapter of Toys for Tots. The large HO layout is in the background. The event was held at the former Kmart building in Vernon Township, Meadville, PA.

- Photo: Jon Gable

## Constructing the Pennsylvania Petroleum Railroad

(continued from page 1)

Though the charter was issued in early 1872, seeking permits to build the line had begun in the Fall of the earlier year. The Titusville Herald reported on October 2nd, 1871 that the City of Titusville granted the PPRR authority for laying track within its city limits. Following that on November 17th the Pittsburgh Daily Commercial released a story that said the PPRR officers had held a meeting in Titusville and had awarded a contract to Belden & Co. of Syracuse, NY to construct the line from Cambridge to Tidioute along with the short connection to the Pithole RR. They also reported that the line was expected to be extended to Erie Harbor as soon as they completed the surveys.

made to M.R. Barr for work at the docks in Erie. They claimed at that time the railroad owned twenty waterfront lots in Erie for locating their proposed elevators. In addition they wrote that the line from Cambridge to Titusville was all graded, with several miles of track laid from Cambridge. Also, they repeated the news that the Pithole division to Pleasantville was track ready, adding that work between Titusville and Enterprise had moved quickly.

The following year began with a report from the Pittsburgh Weekly Gazette dated February 26, 1873 stating the stockholders of the A&GW ratified negotiations for the railroad to lease the Pennsylvania Petroleum Railroad, the Pithole Valley Railroad and the Shenango & Allegheny Railroad. The Titusville Herald on that same day stated funds necessary to lease these roads had been obtained by a 7 percent, thirty year loan of four and one-half million dollars negotiated in the London (England) market. Following this report on March 26th the Pittsburgh Weekly Gazette stated the offices of the railroad were being moved to Meadville. In addition, the stockholders elected new officers, including James B. Hodgskin, President.

(To be continued in the Fall 2018 issue of the "Valley Express".)



Bessemer & Lake Erie wood boxcar #80412, on display at Pomona Park, Meadville, PA. Restoration to be completed this summer.

- Photo: Carl Timko



## A Note of Appreciation

(continued from page 1)

Thank you to all who bought raffle tickets to benefit Toys for Tots. This charity is well worth supporting as it helps children who may not receive a Christmas gift without their help. Thanks to all who slipped some cash into our donation box. The FCVRRHS's funding comes from dues, donations, merchandise sales and grants. Without these resources, the organization would not be able to exist. And thanks to all the members who worked together to help every patron that came in be entertained, comfortable, and respected. There were times when the crowd could have been overwhelming, but the members worked like a well-oiled machine to keep things running smoothly.

We hope next season will bring as many friends back to see us again.

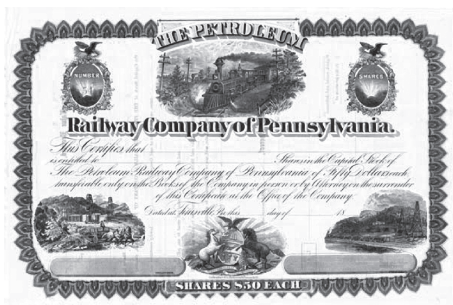
- Carl Timko

## Other News

Local railroad author Ken Springirth has released his new book out titled, "Pennsylvania's Trolley Heritage". The book is mostly a photographic album of trolleys in the many communities of Pennsylvania that operated streetcars. The photographs are very clear with captions detailing the subject of the photo. There are 20 chapters that recount the history of the trolley lines in Pennsylvania. Chapters relating to the immediate area include Northwester Pennsylvania Trolleys and Sharon and New Castle Trolleys. The chapter on the Northwestern Pennsylvania trolleys includes a brief history of the Erie Transit Co., the Erie Traction Co., the Cleveland & Erie, the Conneaut & Erie, Northwestern Pennsylvania Railway, Buffalo & Lake Erie and the Buffalo & Erie Railways. The only photo of the Northwestern Pennsylvania Railway is one of the Cambridge Springs trolley station. Other cities covered include Johnstown, Altoona, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, to name a few.

Ken plans to sign and sell books sometime this year at the EL caboose in Meadville. Watch for an announcement.

- Carl Timko



Stock certificate of the Pennsylvania Petroleum Railway

Photo from the George H. LaBarre Galleries, Inc. - [www.glabarre.com](http://www.glabarre.com)

Then came the report from the Titusville Herald on August 29, 1872 stating 4 miles of track had been laid out of Cambridge moving east, and that the line from Pithole to Pleasantville is graded and ready for laying rail. The report also said a thousand tons of iron rail was on the ground at Cambridge Springs.

In the meantime the contract for the purchase of the Shenango and Allegheny by the PPRR was executed on September 6. The Pittsburgh Post printed that the PPRR was being pushed forward rapidly. They expected that trains will connect Pithole with the A&GW at Cambridge in October.

The Forest Republican (Tionesta, PA) filed an article on October 16th in 1872 that stated a contract had been



French Creek Valley  
Railroad Historical Society  
P.O. Box 632  
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Erie RR ALCO S2 #518 on display  
in Meadville.

French Creek Valley Railroad Historical Society  
Calendar of Events  
Spring - Summer 2018

**April 8 - Youngstown Model Railroad Assn.  
Toy Train Flea Market**

Salem Center Plex, 1098 N. Ellsworth Ave., Salem, OH  
10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.; *Admission: \$5*

**April 14 - Beaver Spring Train Show**

Beaver Spring Auction Center  
Rte 522 between Selinsgrove and Lewistown, PA  
10 a.m. to 3?; *Admission: \$4*

**April 15 - Beaver Co. Spring Model Train Sale**

Monaca Turners, 1700 Brodhead Rd., Monaca, PA  
10 a.m. to 3 p.m.; *Admission: \$5*

**April 28 - Pittsburgh Model Railroad Jamboree**

Yorktown Hall, Robert Morris University  
*Registration: NMRA members: \$30 before Apr. 10;  
non-NMRA members: \$40; After Apr. 10 add \$5*

**May 5 - TCA Lake Erie Chapter Spring Train Meet**

U.A.W. Hall, 5615 Chevrolet Blvd., Parma, OH  
10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

**May 19 - National Train Day  
& Community Day Event**

W. Pittsburgh Train Station, 805 9th St., West Pittsburgh, PA  
10 a.m. to 4 p.m.; *free admission*

**July 21,22 - Greenberg's Great Train Show**

Monroeville Convention Center, 209 Mall Blvd.,  
Monroeville, PA; *\$10 Sat., \$9 Sun.*

**July 21 - Jefferson, OH. Historical Society  
Train Swap and Sale Event**

Jefferson Community Center  
11 E. Jefferson St., Jefferson, OH;  
10 a.m. to 3 p.m.; *Admission: \$2*



Setting up the large HO layout for the last time with Dave  
Ellis, Mike Lynch, Bernie Hanmore - *Carl Timko photo*



John Snyder making his pitch to a few of the hundreds of  
supporters who stopped at the old Kmart to see the layouts  
and buy that special gift for the railfan in their lives.

- *Carl Timko photo*