

VALLEY EXPRESS

A Picture Worth a Thousand Words

Recently, while I was doing research on a model circus car project, I went onto a site dedicated to railroad passenger cars. After finding a couple of pictures of what I was working on, I decided to investigate the other equipment in the collection. When I began to investigate the Motor Cars section, I discovered this picture of Erie 4053. So, what was so interesting about this photo? It's a Model 75, fifty-six seat, 55 foot long, J.C.Brill 6-cylinder gas-mechanical railcar rated at 175 hp and having a top speed of 59 MPH. It was delivered to the Erie Railroad in March 1926. So, what's so important about that? Because it is sitting in front of the Meadville Erie RR Station! But what makes that important? I will tell you.

The Erie Railroad was in transition in 1929, with new-President John J. Bernet taking control of the road's destiny. Prior to this, the Erie had experimented with self-propelled cars with little success. But, by 1923 they began purchasing Brill cars for the intention of lowering the cost of operations on their numerous branch lines. These cars could be operated by a two-man crew, and handle the same number of passengers that the existing steam trains carried, with three fewer crew members. The cars proved to be successful, and additional cars were purchased.

The Meadville-Oil City Branch was a good candidate for a doodlebug, as they were often called by the crews. Passenger head counts were steadily disappearing because, by 1929, the motor vehicle was becoming the preferred means of travel. So, in January 1929, the steam-powered trains on the branch were replaced by the #4053. Timetables from January 20, 1929 through to January 15, 1932 showed the motor car making the 36.3 mile distance 2 round trips daily.

But, these little dark red-colored machines were reportedly difficult to operate and maintain because of their mechanical transmissions.

(continued on page 5)



Erie Railroad Brill Doodlebug #4053 at Meadville depot.
Photo courtesy of North East Rails.

WABTEC Acquires RELCO

WABTEC, formerly known as Westinghouse Air Brake Co., has acquired RELCO Locomotive. RELCO is well-known in the locomotive manufacturing and rebuilding business. RELCO also leases locomotives to railroads and industries that have their own rail lines.

WABTEC, known originally for the air brake, has expanded its catalog of services by recently acquiring General Electric Locomotive that had facilities in Fort Worth, Texas and Erie, PA. WABTEC manufactures parts for locomotives, freight cars, positive train control and signaling devices, industrial parts and components, and parts for passenger equipment and buses. They also have services to repair, rebuild and upgrade said parts. WABTEC will be paying \$29 million to acquire RELCO.

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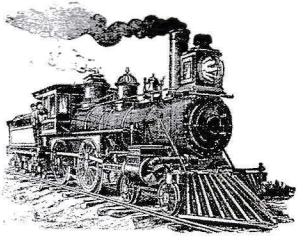
- Carl Timko

WNYP GE Locomotives

The newly acquired GE AC4600CW locomotives have appeared, one at a time, in Meadville Yard. The #6005 appeared during the week of December 14 and the #6004 appeared during the week of January 10, 2020.

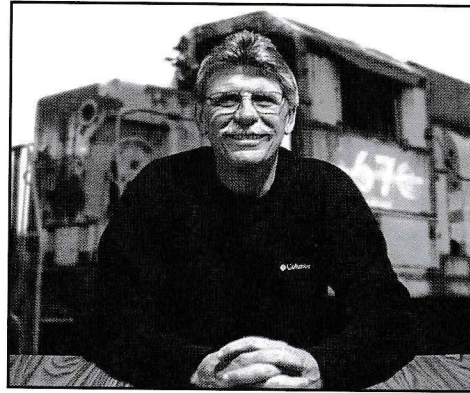
There are two more that will be shipped soon.

- Carl Timko



From the Stationmaster's Office

During the past month, a health crisis hit the globe like a runaway train in notch eight. We hope all our members and their families are healthy and safe. We hope the virus crisis is over soon and everyone can resume their normal routines. As of this writing, it is unknown how long we will be able to continue working on the depot. The Vo-Tech students are not able to help now that all schools have been closed due to the pandemic. We will let all members know if we have to temporarily shut down operations.



Bernie Hanmore

In the meantime, we have progressed quite a bit since the Fall issue of the *Valley Express*. We still have wiring to be completed, but the floors and walls have been insulated. The floors have a sub-layer, while drywall has been hung on the walls. Heating ducts have been installed and the furnace set in place. The water will be turned on soon. We have a new door on the south entry. We will be priming and painting walls very soon, after which wainscoting will be installed. It is exciting how close we are to opening. We have a ways to go, but progress is being made. Thank you to all members that helped. Thank you to Ralph Acker, Bill Bernicky and the votech students, Mark Roche, Mark Johnson, Smock Plumbing, Alvin Hostetler and his crew. Thanks to all who donated and supported us. Without every one of you, the renovation would not be possible. Thanks to you all. Stay safe and be well.

CONTRIBUTORS

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- Al Reibel
- American Legion - Charles N. Stafford Post 3
- Amy Martin
- Antique Auto Club
- Arden Hibbard
- Benton Bartlett
- Bernie & Lori Hanmore
- Bonnie Murphy
- Carl Belke
- Chris Myers
- Clara Sheakley
- Clark Hoffman
- Crawford Lodge 234
- Donald & Nancy Zimmer
- Fred & Joann Cunningham
- Grand Leprechaun Contest
- Heather Martin
- Home Depot
- Hunt Christie
- Jack & Linda Sheets
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- Richard Meurer
- Roger Willis
- Rotary District 7280
- Scott & Joyce Ladner
- Stan Niwa
- Susan Yosten
- VFW Post 2006
- Watson Run Women's Club

French Creek Valley Express

A Publication of the
French Creek Valley Railroad
Historical Society

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Memberships:

\$20 individual; \$35 family;
\$5 student under 18

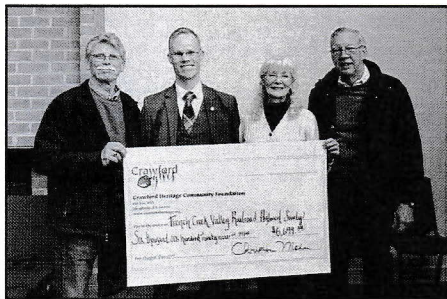
The corporate Gold, Silver, and Bronze memberships and Lifetime memberships have been eliminated.

All members with lifetime memberships will not lose them.

Budget / Finance / Insurance / Compliance

Currently, about 80% of the costs of renovating the depot, during the Phase I stage, has been met with donations, grants, and volunteer work. Grants are being sent in as they are found and determined if the FCVRRHS qualifies.

Inserted in this issue is a full-page article by Maryann Martin on the current financial status of the depot renovation project.



Bernie Hanmore (left), Maryann Martin and Ed Cronin (right) receive a check from Crawford Gives Christian Maher.

History & Archives

Member Steve M. Timko, Jr. gets a shout out for his donations of railroad artifacts, books, magazines, and paperwork. Archivist Carl Timko sorted through the donations and designated the items as archives or for fundraising purposes. Some items already sold at the Erie Train Show, the first of March.

- Carl Timko

Carl Timko has taken on the project of cataloging the inventory of the organization's archives. He announced at a meeting recently that he will be using QR (Quick Response) Codes to tag and inventory all of the items. The codes will reference inventory files and will be very useful to lend out some material such as books or videos.

- Carl Timko

The FCVRRHS will have two tables at the next Erie Train Show on November 8, if the coronavirus crisis is over by then. A deposit on the tables was made at the March show.

- Carl Timko

Membership

The board acted on a proposal by Carl Timko to safeguard members' email addresses. The proposal was to ask the members to approve or disapprove the use of their email to outside affiliates. This wasn't a vote to do one or the other, but rather to

abide by each member's wishes. The secretary has twice sent an email asking members for their decision. Even though the member has their choice, we will still protect the emails as best as we can. The outside affiliates would be charged to safeguard the emails.

-Carl Timko

The French Creek Valley Railroad Historical Society welcomes several new members. Joining since the last edition of *Valley Express* are Ralph Acker, Greg Harvey, James and Antoinet Harvey, Clark Hoffman, David Hotchkiss, Richard James and family, Barb Kaputa, James Maccafferi, Norm and Patti M'Sadoques, Richard and Joanne Noonan, Blaine and Kathleen Ohl, Tom and Jackie Palmer, Ray and Diane Prusia, Steve and Patty Sample, Dan Williams, Roger Willis, and Don and Nancy Zimmer. Welcome aboard, everyone!

If each of our members would just ask one other person or family to join, statistics show that about 45% of those asked would accept the invitation, and that would be a reason to **BLOW THE WHISTLE!** Cost is just \$20 per year for an individual or \$35 for a family. By joining now, dues are paid through June 30, 2021. We don't know how long our **social distancing** will be around, but Together We Will Get Through This.

- Scott Ladner

Vice President/Membership

As this periodical is being written and edited, word was received the April membership meeting had been canceled. Members will be notified when the next membership meeting can take place. In the meantime, we hope everyone can stay home, be safe and well so we can see you at the next meeting. It is a good time to build your layouts, add your scenery, or read a good railroad book.

-Carl Timko

Model Railroading

A crew gathered and traveled to Mr. Tony Petruso's residence to dismantle his O gauge model railroad layout and haul it to storage. Once the depot is ready for the layout to be displayed, it will be transported to the depot and reassembled. It only took four hours for the layout to be disassembled and hauled!

-John Snyder

Three young fellows are currently enrolled in the Meadville Model Railroad Club and are building layouts in their own homes. A plan earlier had the fellows traveling to different members' houses and helping with the building, maintenance, or operation of the layouts. The CoVid-19 pandemic put a hold on that for a while.

-Scott Ladner

Don't forget to look at page 6 for the **Model Railroad Resources** In addition to the note regarding TrainWorld, they are having videos on their Facebook page, some from manufacturers making release announcements, some are clinics. The videos are probably still on their page. One clinic was by a Soundtraxx representative who demonstrated how to install a decoder in DCC ready locomotive. There might be more videos available from different companies or model railroading clubs. We all might be stuck at home, but who can work on their layouts on the road?

-Carl Timko

Museum

As of this writing, the depot now has water service and gas heat. Two new doors for the bathrooms have been hung along with the door to the second floor. The supporting poles have been enclosed. The bathrooms have been painted in a green shade. The walls in the main portion of the depot are to be painted soon. Also, a utility sink has been installed in the work shop.

-Jack Sheets

Property and Equipment

Should the pandemic end soon, some work at the railroad equipment displays are likely to begin this spring. The snowplow will need its floor repaired and windows replaced as funds come in to afford the project. A fence between the WNYP and the snowplow still needs to be erected. The boxcar is to have its east side door rebuilt. The frame will be either repaired or an entirely new frame built and new wood installed. No word has been given on any work to be done on the #518 or the caboose. One mention from Jack Sheets was that the top of the #518 could use a new coat of paint.

Public Relations & Education

As most readers may know from reading the Meadville Tribune and the Second Section, our own Jack Sheets was entered into the Jack Curtin's St. Patrick's Day Parade Grand Leprechaun contest. The premise of this contest is to raise funds for the contestant's favorite non-profit organization. Votes are made by contributing, via special envelopes, in the name of the contestant. In this case, Jack Sheets, who made the French Creek Valley Railroad Historical Society's Meadville Railroad Depot project the beneficiary.



LEPRECHAUN JACK SHEETS

Votes were to be placed in designated gold boxes around the city of Meadville. When the voting ended on March 13, the final tally had Jack in third place with \$1919. The winner was Dawnmel Grove for the Yolanda G. Barco Oncology Institute, whose project was raising funds for an accelerator. The winner was to ride on a float in the St. Patrick's Day parade on Saturday, March 14, but the coronavirus outbreak put the brakes on the parade, as well as all events across the country. We congratulate Jack on a fine effort. Also, thanks to Nick Ozorak for getting the ball rolling on this fundraising effort.

-Carl Timko

Special Events & Programs

Due to the CoVid-19 pandemic, as of this writing, no special events or programs have been scheduled. Readers will note on page 6, that the **Calendar of Events** column has been replaced with a table of resources to entertain the computer users of the membership. Depending on how fast the virus is contained and controlled, the next issue of *Valley Express* may have the **Calendar of Events** column restored. That being said, the FCVRRHS is scheduled to be at the Erie Train Show on Sunday, November

8. Please note the date. The usual practice for the Erie Train Show is the first Sunday in March and November. Due to Rainbow Gardens having an event scheduled for November 1, the promoters of the train show had to settle for the following Sunday.

Hopefully, we will see you there!

-Carl Timko

On The Side Track

B&LE/CN buys CSX Massena Line

Some readers may already know this. While searching on www.stb.gov (Surface Transportation Board) for newsworthy items, a transaction was found that, although has involved lines in New York, nonetheless involves our own local railroad, the Bessemer and Lake Erie Railroad and its parent, Canadian National. As of April 6, 2020, the STB approved the acquisition of CSX's Massena Lines by the Bessemer and Lake Erie Railroad / CN. Yes, the Bessemer was specifically mentioned. The acquisition involves 236.3 miles of railroad serving communities serving Woodard, NY to near Fort Covington, NY, which is near the Canadian border. CSX's St. Lawrence Subdivision (179.2 miles), the Fulton Subdivision (31 miles), the Balmat Industrial Track (9 miles), the Rooseveltown Industrial Track (5 miles), the Carthage Branch (12 miles) and a connection with the Mohawk Adirondack and Northern were acquired. It is all a part of a larger agreement in which another 31.8 miles were acquired to Beauharnois, Quebec.

There were objections by several entities, including the Finger Lakes Railway and the New York Susquehanna and Western, among others. Some conditions were applied regarding access to the aforementioned railroads. The STB finally approved the acquisition.

It will be interesting to see what kind of locomotive power serves the lines, whether current CN/B&LE power is used, used locomotives are acquired or new locomotives are purchased.

Commodities normally transported on the Massena Lines includes metals, grain, minerals, automobiles, to name a few.

-Surface Transportation Board

East Broad Top Railroad Sold

Probably the best news for railfans was the sale of the East Broad Top

Railroad by the Kovalchick family to a non-profit organization called EBT Foundation, Inc. The purchase of this iconic steam railroad was led by Brad Esposito, formerly of the Buffalo & Pittsburgh and Genesee & Wyoming railroads, EBT enthusiasts David Brightbill, Lawrence Biemiller, and Stephen Lane. The effort is backed by Wick Moorman, former CEO of Norfolk Southern and Amtrak, Henry Posner III, chairman of the Iowa Interstate Railroad, and Bennett Levin, who owns the Juniata Terminal and the PRR E8s that came through the area several years ago. The Kovalchicks are retaining ownership of the old mines.

Already the group, along with help from the Friends of the EBT volunteers, is starting its rehabilitation on the equipment and plans to rebuild the track. There are six steam locomotives in the shops and, relevant to the lead story, a Brill narrow gauge Doodlebug #M-1. The EBT built the Doodlebug as a kit in 1927. Brill sent all the working components, engine, traction motors, electrical system, brakes, for instance, for the EBT to assemble. It has been reported that the EBT built the carbody themselves.

The East Broad Top Railroad & Coal Co. was chartered in the 1850s. The construction didn't start until the 1860s. Operations began in 1873, serving the coal mines of the Broad Top Mountain. It consisted of 33 miles of line from Mount Union to the coal mines at Robertsdale. Interchange, as it were was with the PRR at Mount Union. The Rockhill Trolley Museum is based on the Shade Gap Branch of the EBT. When the last coal mine closed in 1956, the EBT shut down. Nick Kovalchick purchased the line in 1960 and kept everything intact and eventually started tourist operations over the line, until 2011, when it was shut down again. Repairs on the equipment and structures were made by the volunteers of the Friends of the EBT in the hopes of starting operations again.

Plans are to have a 60th anniversary celebration of the purchase of the EBT, if the CoVid-19 crisis is over. Operations are expected to resume in 2021.

- Report from the East Broad Top's website: www.eastbroadtop.com/nonprofitbuysebt/ which reported the sale.

Doodlebug

(continued from page 1)

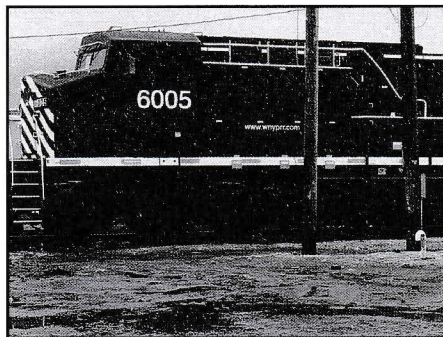
Although the Erie had already begun purchasing gas-electric motor cars in the middle of 1930, they chose not to replace the #4053 with one of the newer cars. Instead, with the April 30, 1933 timetable, the railroad began using Welsh Bus Line for providing service to the branch. By September 25, 1938, the service, which was now provided by Harmony Short Line, who had acquired the Welsh operation in July of 1937, was down to one round trip daily. Finally, Oil City passenger service ended with the publication of Erie timetable dated June 3, 1939.

So, what happened to the #4053? In March of 1936, the #4053 was converted into trailer car No. 4013, and appeared to work out of Avon, NY. By 1951 the entire motor car fleet that remained on the Erie was retired.

For me, this picture was a great find, for it answered one unknown question: what motor car was assigned to the Oil City branch? And, the resulting research of its history resulted in answers to the operation that the #4053 was part of.

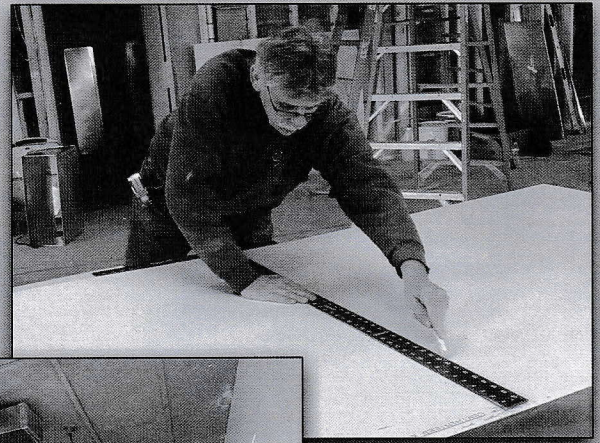
Thanks goes to Robert Daly, whose donation of his collection of Erie Railroad Passenger Timetables to our Society, aided in the research of this article.

-Dennis Mead



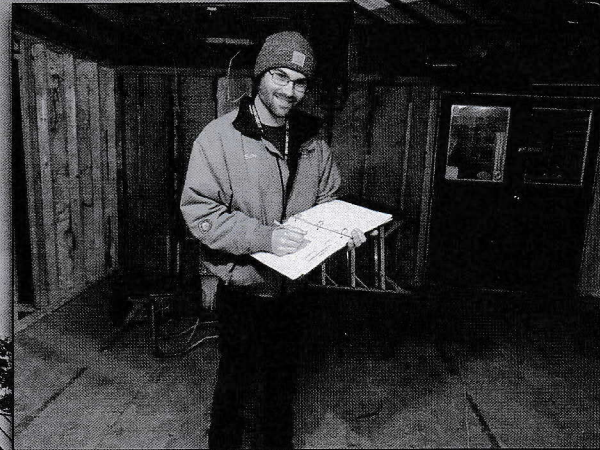
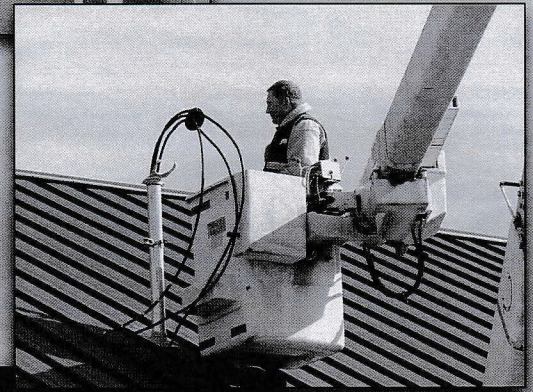
Western New York & Pennsylvania Railroad
AC4600CW #6005 on a snowy
December 14, 2019 at Meadville yard.
(photo by Vanessa Timko)

Bernie Hanmore marking
drywall cut line at
Meadville Railroad Depot.
(Photo by Maryann Martin)



Interior of Depot after
drywall has been hung.
(Photo by Maryann Martin)

Mark A. Johnson installing
weatherhead and mast on
roof of depot.
(Photo by Maryann Martin)

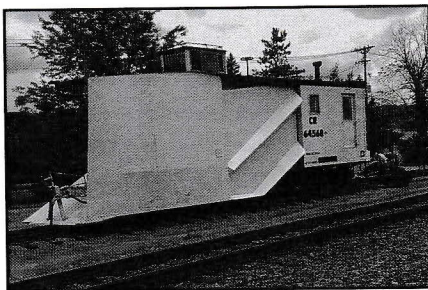


CCC&TC Electrical
Occupancy Instructor
who is training
his students while
wiring the depot.
(Photo by Maryann
Martin)





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Conrail Snowplow #64568 - Carl Timko

Due to the CoVid-19 virus crisis, *Calendar of Events* would be irrelevant due to the massive cancellations of events. We hope to have it in the next issue. In its place, *Motel Railroad Resources* to look at online. For those that have no computer, we have no suggestions other than to ask a member to print out what you may be interested in.

Model Railroad Resources

Facebook - Several railroad and model railroading videos; Search for specific videos on Facebook's address bar.

Model Railroad Forum - look for questions and answers on subjects in which you are interested.
www.modelrailroadforum.com

Model Railroad Hobby Stores - Search on your favorite search engine.

Model Railroad Hobby Stores in PA - www.funpennsylvania.com/category/hobby-stores-in-pa/

Model Railroading Tips and Techniques, Videos - www.modelrailroadingacademy.com (has some free videos as well as videos that can be purchased)

Model Railroad Hobbyist Magazine - free model railroad magazine - www.model-railroad-hobbyist.com

Railserve - Directory for Railroad and Model Railroad enthusiasts. Information for railroaders as well.
www.railserve.com

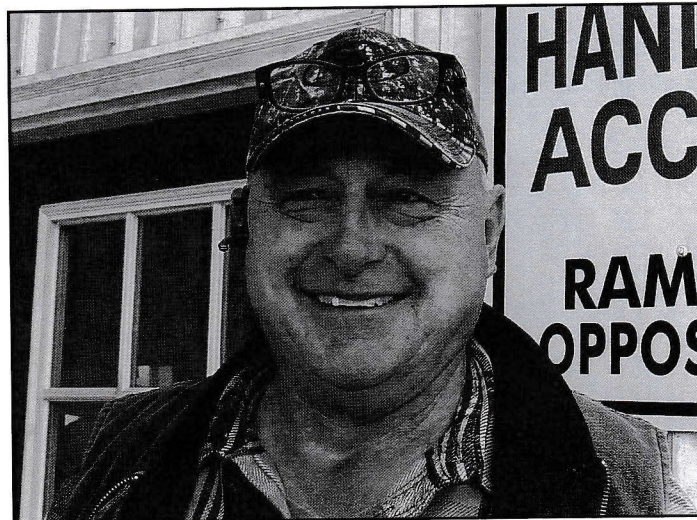
TrainWorld - Trainworld/Trainland - The superstore that appears near the front of your favorite model railroading magazine. www.trainworld.com

Walthers - Catalog of model railroading supplies
www.walthers.com

Woodland Scenics - www.woodlandscenics.com



WNYP AC4600CW #6004 at Meadville Yard
January 10, 2020. (Photo by Carl Timko)



Electrician Ralph Acker supervised CCC&TC students at the Meadville Railroad Depot.