

French Creek Valley Railroad Historical Society

P.O. Box 632 Meadville, PA 16335

SPRING 2012

Newsletter of the French Creek Valley Railroad Historical Society

Volume 7 Number 1

VALLEY EXPRESS

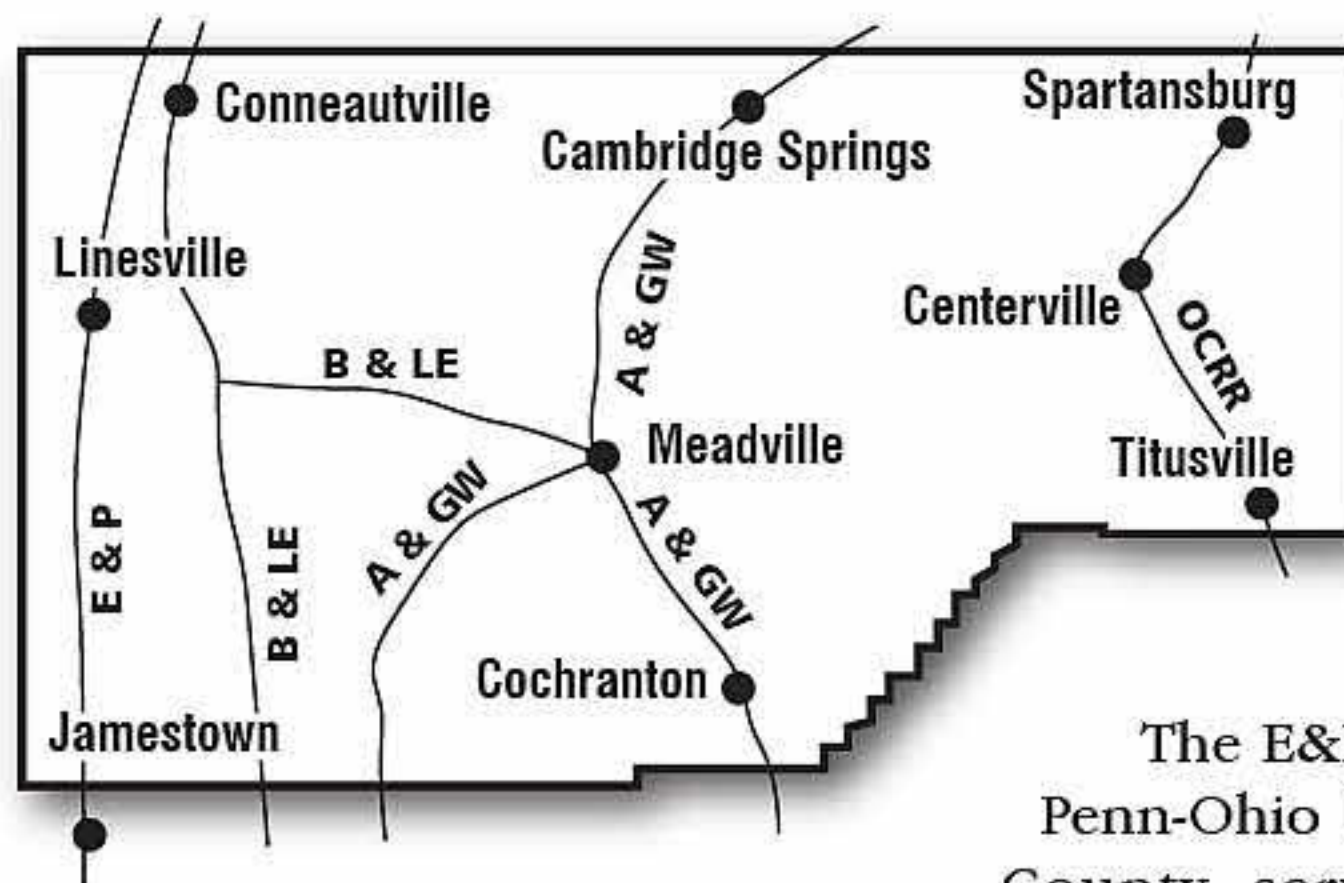
The Railroads of Crawford County

This year we will be celebrating an historical anniversary here in Meadville - that of the beginning of service 150 years ago, of the A&GW Railroad on November 10, 1862. On that day Meadville was connected with the outside world with a ribbon of steel rail, rail that would give farmers and manufacturers a means to reach markets to the east in shorter time. Within the next couple of years, the tracks would extend to the west as well as to the oil fields to the south in Venango County.

But railroad construction did not just stop there. In the coming years three north-south rail lines would be built before the age of railroad construction would stop in the county. In *The Valley Express*, Vol. 3, no.'s 1 and 2, we covered the construction of the Bessemer and Lake Erie Railroad, along with the Meadville Branch - all in the western part of the county. In this issue we will cover the other lines built during the same period.

The Erie and Pittsburgh Railroad Company

The Erie and Pittsburgh (E&P), with offices in Erie, was incorporated under a special act of Pennsylvania on April 1, 1858. Operations began between Girard Junction, just west of Girard, PA and Jamestown, PA in March of 1860. In the beginning it was operated jointly with the Buffalo and State Line Railroad (later, NYC), but then by the E&P's own management until February 1870. In March 1870 the Pennsylvania Railroad (PRR) stepped in and leased the line for 999 years. As part of the charter, the E&P was to have tracks to Erie and to New Castle, where it connected with another PRR line, within 5 years of its beginning, which it accomplished.



The E&P followed along the Penn-Ohio border of Crawford County, serving Conneautville

and Linesville. At Linesville it connected with the Meadville Railway Company, later the Meadville Branch of the B&LE railroad. During much of the railroad's history it hauled coal from other connections south of Pittsburgh to the coal docks of Erie, for shipment on the Great Lakes. By the early 1970's the line was being leased by the Penn Central Railroad. With the Penn Central's former NYC line running parallel to the west, they chose to move the coal traffic on to the NYC route to Ashtabula Harbor, and then began abandoning the E&P line from Jamestown, PA north to Girard Junction. Conrail took over the railroad in April 1976 and with that began placing much of the remaining railroad out of service. Today, all that remains of the Erie and Pittsburgh Railroad in Crawford County is abandoned right of way.

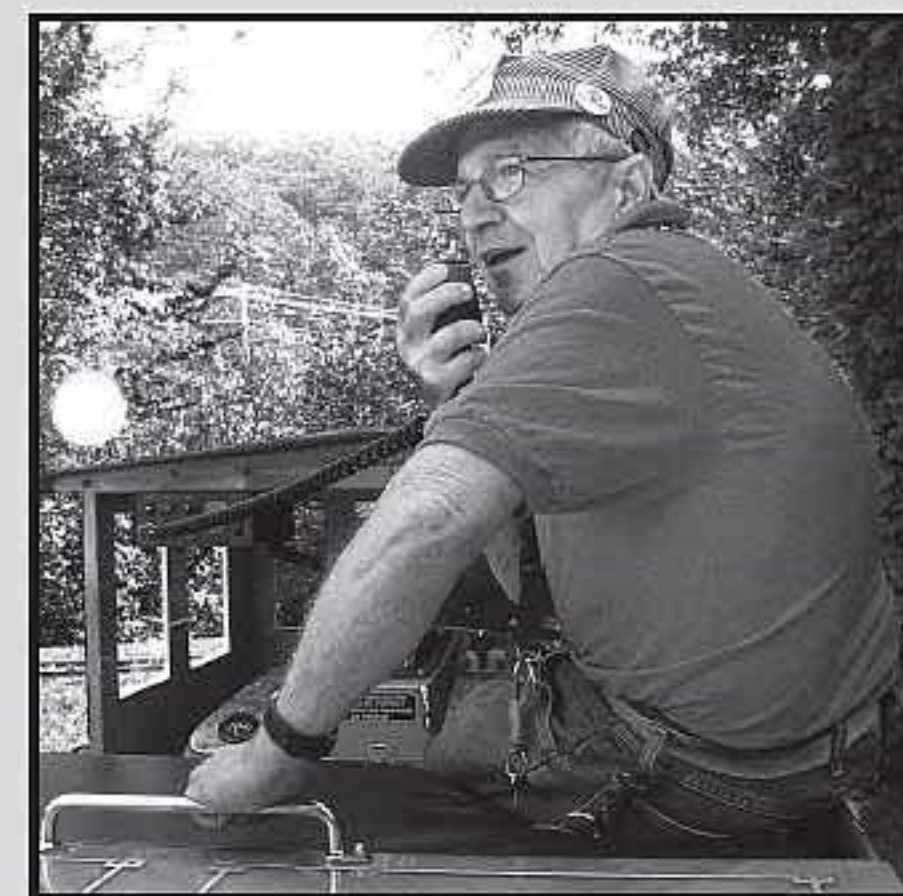
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Local Update

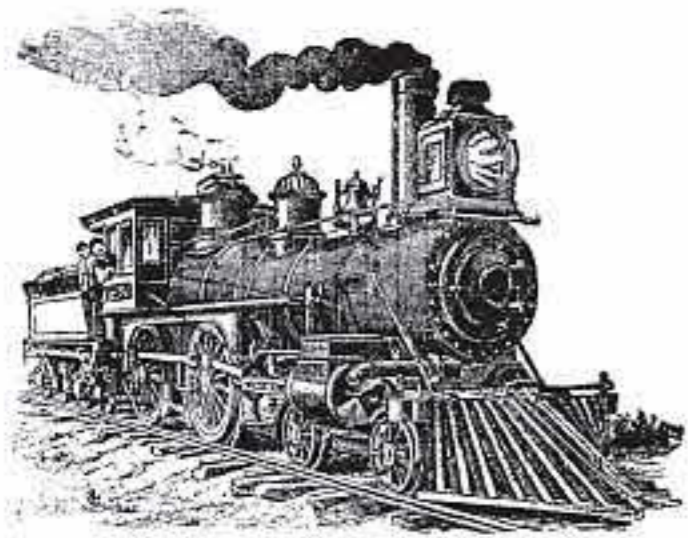
The B&LE Historical Society held its spring meeting recently in Meadville at the Country Club, where Carl Belke, WNYP President and COO was featured guest speaker. Visitors were also treated to a tour of the caboose and several local model train layouts.

Local coal shipments have ceased due to (1) power plant conversions to natural gas, and (2) compliance issues with EPA. Three trains per week now haul hot parafin wax, fracking sand, brine, lumber, chemicals and food products.

On May 12th, National Train Day was celebrated at the Erie Zoo where FCVRRHS President Denny Mead operates the Park's train for weekend visitors.



A series of articles appeared recently in the Erie Times indicating GE Transportation expansion to Fort Worth, Texas, where an existing plant facility has been acquired and the Company given a tax break as an incentive. A second building will house the manufacture of motorized drive systems for mine trucks. Expansion is also underway at Erie and in Grove City, where increasing environmental restraints require improved engine manufacturing tolerances. The Grove City plant will have the added responsibility of rebuilding engines.



From the Stationmaster's Office

The summer of 2012 is coming upon us, although many of us thought it arrived in March. After a reality check, that is, more snow, we are now certain of its arrival. And with that comes several projects to look forward to. Among those are the general clean-up of the caboose site as well as the caboose itself. The ELHS Spring Meeting here on May 5th was a challenge to get this accomplished.

The 518 has recently been pressure washed and painted with its first coat of black paint. Sadly, not much more can be done on the engine until it is moved to the caboose site from Jefferson, Ohio. I'm sure if you have run into Ed Cronin, he can tell you how hard it is to find a trucking company that will move it for us. But hopefully we can get the engine delivered here in Meadville by late summer, after which the task will be putting it back together. I hope we can remember where everything goes!

All this leads to the matter of volunteer labor. We have had lots of great help, but we always enjoy a new face at the work sessions. Can you work with big wrenches, or handle a scrub brush like a Navy recruit on a boat deck? Or, maybe you can simply greet people and give a description of the caboose on a Sunday afternoon. If you think you can be of help, give Carl Timko or Ed Cronin a call and ask what you can contribute to the cause.

This will be my last column as your President. Due to my health problems, I requested the Board to find a replacement to finish my term. Although I have some time to go with my treatments, I promise you I will be back at the meetings as soon as possible. I want to express my appreciation to all my Board members for all they have done to make my administration succeed during these past five years. I also want to thank my Secretary Carl Timko for everything he has done for me. Without him I am sure there would have been many thank-you letters and notices missed. I know the newly elected President will quickly find out how valuable Carl can be.

Dennis Mead



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

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

Budget and Finance

Thanks to brisk T-shirt and calendar sales, our treasury is as big as it has ever been. With membership now over 70, dues payments help a lot too. Many thanks are due those members who have sent us a few extra dollars to help with the Erie 518 locomotive project. We are still trying to set up transportation to move the 518 to Meadville, and every dollar we can raise for that project will be needed.

We made a few more dollars this spring by hosting the Erie Lackawanna Historical Society on May 5. Unfortunately, efforts to arrange an excursion train proved unsuccessful; but if such an event were planned annually, insurance expenses might be affordable.

The next time you see Tom Collard at Tom's Train Terminal, please offer a word of thanks. Not only does he offer all members a discount in his store, but he now subsidizes the rent for the Model Railroad Club.

-Ed Cronin



Membership

The Board has decided the annual business dinner will be held at the Country Club on Route 86, north of Meadville on Thursday, June 28, 2012. Social time will begin at 5 p.m, with dinner at 6 p.m. Elections of officers are planned. President Dennis Mead will step down as president, but would like to remain on the Board. A suggestion from the

Board is to have Vice President Bernie Hanmore serve out the remaining year of Dennis' Term, while Denny becomes Vice President. In the event of their absence, Ed Cronin or Carl Timko will conduct the meetings. Terms of members that are expiring are Board members Jack Sheets and Bill McComas; both agreed to serve another two year term. Ed Cronin has stressed that his term as Treasurer is expiring and that he prefers that someone else take the position. In doing so, he would assume the position of Assistant Treasurer.

Member Jason Ferguson has missed several meetings due to illness. He has proven to be a willing and capable member and leader. We wish him a speedy recovery.

-Carl Timko & Ed Cronin

Museum

In the last issue I mentioned that we had an agreement to acquire the museum site. On November 17, 2011 we had a press conference at the Bessemer Building to recognize this gift from the Economic Progress Alliance of Crawford County. The publicity we were able to generate helped with the Financial Feasibility Study which was completed on February 13, 2012.

The results of the Financial Feasibility Study indicate we have strong public support for the Heritage Center but not enough to begin the silent phase of the capitol campaign. We need to further develop the project and consolidate all of the groups that are part of it. Some of the study participants don't

know much about the organization and, until they see some tangible evidence that the project is really going to happen, will be reluctant to contribute.

Karen Petrucelli, our consultant, recommended that we begin the building on a modest scale with grants where possible to show a physical presence in the community.

Thanks to board member Marilyn Black, we became aware of the Transportation Enhancements Program in December of 2011. The program is funded through the Federal Highway Department and administered by PennDot. On March 5 we filed an application which, if awarded, would fund 80% of the transportation wing of the museum. In addition, our grant writing committee is searching for other grants that would enable us to construct a railroad siding onto the property and acquire former Conrail #3639, an SDP 45 that regularly worked the Meadville Division and beyond. At our March 2012 board meeting we began expanding our organizational structure by adding a Vice President for Finance and Fundraising and additional committees. Current committees are:

- Collections • Public Relations
- Development/ Fundraising
- Education • Exhibits
- Grants • Membership
- NTMA • Site and Building

Currently the Site/Building Committee is adequately staffed; however, if you have an interest in serving on any of the other committees, please contact our secretary, Carl Timko.

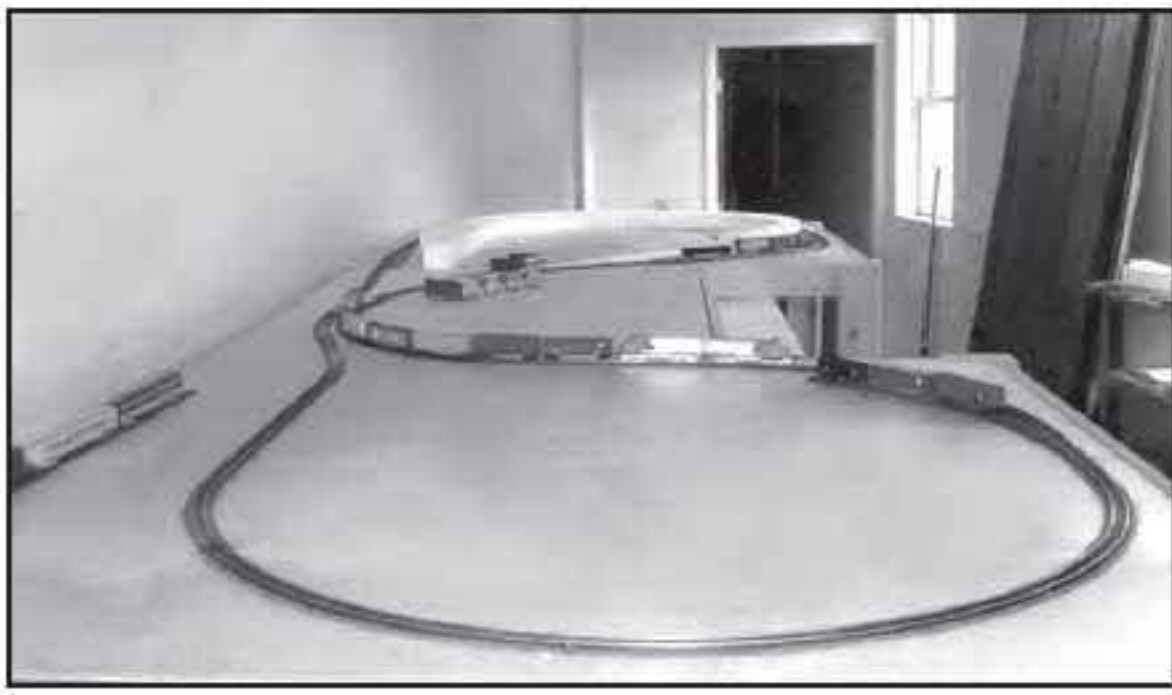
-Ed Cronin

Model Railroad

The French Creek Valley Model Railroaders have made some genuine progress in the last few months. The TT scale modelers have constructed their lower loop and have begun working on the high line. When both loops are finished they will be operated separately, but will have a connecting ramp to allow freight on the high line to be delivered to a crew working on the lower loop. Both loops will have industrial side tracks to serve railroad customers.



Illustration of the proposed Heritage Center



TT Scale layout under construction

The HO Scalpers have made significant progress on their benchwork and have developed an interesting track plan themed around local railroads. The N Scalpers have been hard at work developing their track plan. However, construction has been delayed while a design for supporting their layout was being developed. Thanks to Ed Cronin for resolving the design issues.

Many model railroaders have questions about the proper overhead clearance when a bridge or other structure crosses over track. They also ask about grades to climb from one area to another. The table at the bottom of this column, borrowed from an unknown source, should be of assistance.

So far, Scott has hosted three operating sessions on the Corn Planter layout at his home this year.

Jason Sider and Scott Wilson conducted a DCC Clinic on Thursday, March 29 at the club (@ the Bank, Park Avenue). The speakers covered basic wiring, setup, and operations of DCC equipment for both Digitrax and MRC Prodigy Advanced. They also demonstrated installation of decoders in attendee locomotives. This was one of several planned work shops, which are free to members (and just \$5.00 for nonmembers). Reservations can be

made thru Tom Collard at 814-853-2942.

New models have been popping up like mad this year. A couple of new releases are offered below.



Atlas N PS-2 Covered Hopper

Built by Pullman Standard in the late 1940's and into the 1950's, The PS-2 hoppers were used to transport granular bulk commodities such as cement, soda ash, sand, or grain. Features include: 50-ton friction bearing or 70-ton roller bearing (where appropriate by road name), intricate brake detail, Accurate couplers, fine painting and printing. Undecorated models sell for \$10.95, while decorated versions sell for \$13.95. New paint schemes include two numbers. Each are available in B&O, Milwaukie, MKT, N&W, Rock Island, NH, PRR, and Santa Fe.

The Pullman Heavyweight 3-2 Observation Car has a black roof and is painted dark blue and gray with gold stripes and lettering. It was built by Pullman in the 1930's according to plan 3959D, the common end-of-train car style for many passenger trains throughout the early 20th century.

-Tom Collard & Scott Wilson

Special Events / Programs

At the ELHS western division spring meet, members and guests enjoyed several presentations, including: (1) WNYP Railroad, Short

Line Industry by Carl Belke, President and COO, (2) Early EL by Mike Schleigh, (3) Career with Conrail by Dick Noonan, and (4) Valuation Maps, DVD, and Demo. The latter allowed superimposing of PA rail on U.S. Geological Survey charts utilizing digital topography.

-Dan Higham & Carl Timko

Public Relations

The past several months for the organization have been pretty good, and the coming months will mean more things happening. During the holidays the layout was again on display at the Downtown Mall, and it featured our large HO scale layout, as well as the large scale trolley display. Sales items available included our caboose T-shirts, the calendars, and miscellaneous model train kits. We also had two raffle items, a gift certificate to Tom's Train Terminal with the proceeds going to the FCVRRHS, and a Bachmann HO train set donated by Carl Timko with proceeds going to Toys for Tots. I am pleased to say that sales went very well, especially for the calendars. Thanks goes out to all our layout volunteers. They proved to be great salesmen.

As I mentioned, the calendars have done very well. Work on the 2013 calendars will begin early this summer, with plans to market them even earlier in the fall than was done last year.

We hosted the Erie Lackawanna Historical Society Spring Meet, on May 5th. Among the activities scheduled were train layout tours - Ed Cronin's B&LE (HO), Carl Ferguson's UP (G), Ed Blenner's N scale, Shorty Parker's PRR (HO), Scot Wood's B&LE (O), and Denny Mead's EL (G). The dinner was held at the Country Club, and featured Carl Belke, President of the WNYP railroad as the dinner speaker. Ken Springirth, autographed and sold his latest books. Tables were available for displays of models and other railroad articles. It proved to be an exciting event.

-Dennis Mead



OVERHEAD CLEARANCE MINIMUMS AND GRADES

Scale	Clearance		2% Run		3% Run		4% Run	
	in.	mm.	in.	mm.	in.	mm.	in.	mm.
O	6.5	165	325	8250	216.67	5500	162.5	4125
S	5.5	140	275	7000	183.33	4666.67	137.5	3500
OO	3.75	95	187.5	4750	125	3166.67	93.75	2375
HO	3.5	90	175	4500	116.67	3000	87.5	2250
TT	2.5	65	125	3250	83.33	2166.67	62.6	1625
N	2	50	100	2500	66.67	1666.67	50	1250
Z	1.5	40	75	2000	50	1333.33	37.5	1000

Note: Run values are for one grade only. To rise to an over crossing and descend from it requires two runs of the values indicated.

History & Archives

The Caboose was recently prepped for lighting but awaits new permitting. The Erie coal tipple sign was propped up for a reminder of earlier times.

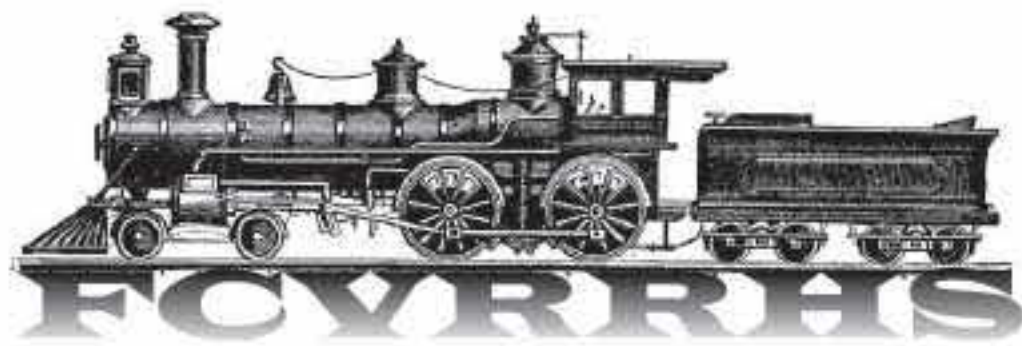
-Pete Gifford

Property and Equipment

The S2 switcher #518 was recently power washed to eliminate the dirt, rust, and AC&J paint scheme.

The former EL scheme was briefly exposed before members returned a week later to paint the bow and cab black to more or less conform to the desired Erie final color. The unit will look even better once the hood has been reinstalled and Erie markings stenciled on. We're blessed to have a core of willing workers, who are available to travel.

-Jack Sheets & Al Reibel



S2 #518 in AC&J colors, being power-washed



S2 briefly in EL paint

S2 with a shiny coat of Erie black



(continued from page 1)

The Oil Creek Railroad

The OCR was chartered under special act of Pennsylvania on April 2, 1860. The initial investors of the project were Thomas Struthers of Warren, PA, one of the leading figures in the construction of the Sunbury & Erie Railroad, later the Philadelphia & Erie Railroad. Along with other investors from Warren, Dr. W. S. Streater of Cleveland, OH would play an important part in the railroad's corporate history.

Construction began in Corry, PA where it connected with the standard gauge Sunbury & Erie (P&E/PRR), and the broad gauge Atlantic and Great Western Railway (Erie). The railroad was built using the 6-foot broad gauge of the A&GW, and the tracks reached Titusville by way of Spartansburg and Centerville in 1862, followed by Miller Farm in 1863 and Shaffer Farm in 1864. Oil instantly became the primary commodity hauled on the line. In the summer of 1864 the ownership of the Oil Creek Railroad fell into the hands of a joint control by the NYC

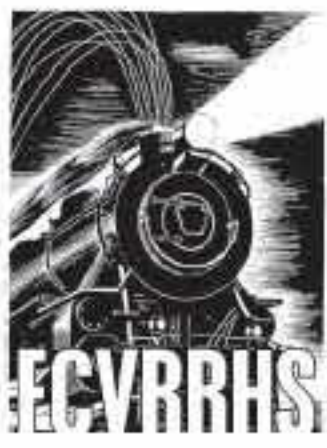
and PRR. Although William Reynolds of the A&GW wanted to obtain the property, no financing was ever secured to complete the transaction. Now the NYC and PRR would share the traffic of the line. In May 1865 a third rail was placed on the line, allowing movement of rolling stock of 4' 8.5" standard gauge. Traffic continued to be robust, with oil its primary commodity. Soon that same year the agreement between the NYC and PRR was terminated, and the PRR became the sole operator of the Oil Creek.

September of 1866 saw the Oil Creek combined with the Farmer's Railroad, giving the line connections to the other railroads at either Corry or Oil City. By 1868, through purchases and consolidations with other rail lines in the Allegheny River Valley, the Oil Creek became part of the Western New York and Pennsylvania (no association with today's WNY&PA). Under the control of the PRR, traffic moved over the route from Buffalo, NY to Pittsburgh, PA for many years after that. Under the Penn Central merger, the line

continued to operate, but with lower traffic levels than in the past. Then when Conrail came along, the railroad began to lose business as the new owners chose to route traffic on other north-south routes. By the late 1970's the railroad from Titusville north thru Corry to Buffalo was abandoned, as well as the railroad south of Oil City to Butler. The only active part of the line in existence today is operated by the OC&T.

What's Left After a period of railroad construction that boomed in the mid-1860's, many of these lines lost their usefulness 100 years later. The survivors, though, were that of the AT&GW railroad and the B&LE. All of the former A&GW track survives, though now under operating control of the Norfolk Southern and Shortline Western NY & PRR. As for the Bessemer routes, the mainline survives today under control of the Canadian National Railroad. The Meadville Branch of the Bessemer remained until 1977, when it was removed from service.

-Dennis Mead



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Railroad Historical Society
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French Creek Valley Railroad Historical Society
Tentative Program & Events Schedule

Spring - Summer 2012

May 5

ELHS Western Spring Meeting

June 28

Annual Business Meeting

May thru Labor Day

Caboose on Display



The
Alco
Switcher



Carl Belke treats ELHS fans with a talk on the WNYP Short Line Industry.

TOM'S TRAIN TERMINAL



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940 Park Avenue, Meadville, PA

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