

The Liggie

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LVRRA ASSESSES INITIAL SEASON OF THE MUSEUM

Recently, members of the board of directors met with the LVRR Museum staff to assess the opening of the museum. Citing a number of positive factors, the group agreed that the inaugural season was a success.



A family outing includes the LVRR Museum.

More than 750 paying guests and a number of Friends of the LVRR visited the museum at the Darlington Station since its opening date on May 22.



Daisy Scouts enjoy their field trip to the LVRR Museum.

Among the 750 guests visiting the museum were several organizations that attended as a group. They included the Ligonier Chapter of the Red Hat Society, the Pennsylvania Railroad Technical and Historical Society, a Cub Scout troop from Latrobe and a Daisy Scout troop from Derry. After leading each group on a tour of the museum, a docent offered participants the opportunity to take a virtual ride on the LVRR via a PowerPoint presentation.

The feedback from the public over the summer has been overwhelmingly complimentary. Most commented on the high quality of the restoration of the station and on the number and variety of the exhibits, as well as the overall attractiveness of the museum. Most popular among the adult visitors has been the interactive map and among the children, the caboose.

During the assessment session, the group discussed how the staff might add to the quality of the museum experience. Exhibits will be evaluated over the winter to determine their relevance to the mission of the museum. The staff plans to thematically regroup displays to create a greater impact. Also, the gift shop will be reorganized so that the merchandise can be more attractively displayed and physically accessible to visitors.

Continued on next page



A couple poses with a division marker.

In addition, the group discussed future priorities. Many members would like to be able to display a model of the LVRR in the museum. Space, however, is a problem, even in HO scale. Display space could be used, but few are willing to sacrifice any of the exhibits.



The caboose is the highlight of the Cub Scouts' field trip.

Future plans also include adding additional displays outside the station near the caboose. They will include full-sized railroad signals, a switch machine and an early link-and-pin coupler, used for connecting railroad cars.

All of the staff members and board of directors agree that one of the most important priorities must be to keep the exhibits in the museum fresh and exciting. LVRRRA's overall goal is to give first-time visitors their money's worth and then to have them want to

return to see what's new in subsequent visits. This will be an ongoing challenge that needs to be met to perpetuate the LVRR Museum at the Darlington Station and to preserve the legacy of railroading in Ligonier Valley.

NEW DIRECTORS ELECTED TO REPLACE STABLEIN AND PILZ

The terms of two original directors of the LVRRRA will be completed as of December 31, 2010. Both Al Pilz and Bill Stablein have served on the board since January 2004 when the LVRRRA was incorporated. During this time their service and dedication has helped the organization to grow into a recognized Ligonier Valley attraction.

Tom Donchez, a retired sales executive, has been named as Bill Stablein's replacement. He and his wife, Nancy, are long-time Ligonier residents. Donchez brings with him a desire to educate the public about the historical importance of the LVRR.

Dave Byers, son and grandson of LVRR employees, will replace Al Pilz. Byers was born and raised in Ligonier and currently lives in Latrobe with his wife, Beth. He, too, is eager to help preserve the legacy of the LVRR.

The board is looking forward to the new ideas these two men will bring to the LVRRRA.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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NEW SIGNAGE PLACED ALONG ROUTE 30

As soon as the signs to the LVRR Museum went up on Route 30, attendance increased as curious passersby dropped in to visit the new museum. In fact, on the first Saturday after the signs were erected, half of the visitors said they had stopped as a result of having seen an LVRR Museum sign.



This eastbound sign at the crest of Idlewild Hill and the additional museum road signs are the result of Bill Potthoff's diligence.

2011 FIELD TRIP FOR LVRR FRIENDS SET FOR APRIL 16

LVRRA's 2011 annual field trip will explore vestiges of the LVRR right-of-way between Ligonier and Latrobe on Saturday April 16. Even though this part of the line was abandoned almost 60 years ago, many features along the 10.6-mile roadbed are still visible. More information about the field trip will be available in the March edition of *The Liggie*.

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quarterly for Friends of the LVRR.

Editor — Bob Stutzman
Associate Editor — Carolyn H. Dillon

WINTER HOURS ANNOUNCED

Through February, winter hours will be Saturdays only, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. As always, special arrangements can be made by calling the office at 724-238-7819.

THIRD ANNUAL MODEL-TRAIN TOUR OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Reserve April 30, 2011, for LVRRA's third annual model-train layout tour. The planning committee, chaired by Bret Pohland, has already booked four layouts in the Latrobe area. Prices will remain the same, \$10 per adult and \$5 per student under 16. Additional details will be available in the March edition of *The Liggie*.

SOMERSET MODEL RAILROAD CLUB EXTENDS INVITATION TO THE PUBLIC

The Laurel Highlands Model Railroad Club has moved to 209 Georgian Place in Somerset. This new site offers ample parking and a large space in which to display the club's vast array of layouts. Its extensive collection includes layouts ranging from the smallest Z gauge to the largest G gauge. On display also is an HO model of the Pittsburgh, Westmoreland and Somerset Railroad, which includes the Ligonier interchange and the Quemahoning Tunnel.

The Laurel Highlands Club annually invites the public to visit its displays over the holiday season, this year beginning on November 20, 2010, through January 16, 2011. Friday hours are 3 p.m. to 7 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday hours are noon to 6 p.m. The admission fee is \$5 per person with children 12 and under admitted free.

NEW MEMBERS SINCE SEPTEMBER

Mark Begeman
John Bialek
Wayne Confer
Robert Eberhart
David Hunter, Jr
Gene Melago
Jack Rupp
Joyce Springer

FRIENDS OF THE LVRR ARE IMPORTANT

There are 331 active Friends of the LVRR. The already impressive membership continues to grow as word spreads about the restoration of the Darlington Station and the opening of the LVRR Museum. Dues from the current membership totaled more than \$12,000 this year, which is a significant portion of the annual operating budget.

Friends also function as volunteers. For example, the 27 Friends who volunteered to staff the Fort Days information booth did much to promote the LVRR to the huge crowd attending the three-day event.

The success of the LVRR heavily depends upon the continued interest of the public in joining the Friends of the LVRR. The support of this group has greatly contributed to LVRR's success in restoring the Darlington Station and opening the railroad museum.

Remember that throughout the year people are needed to staff informational booths, assist tour guides and supply labor for current projects. Please call the office at 724-238-7819 or e-mail info@lvrra.org to volunteer or to become a Friend of the LVRR.

MUSEUM NOW INCLUDES A WORKING MODEL OF A RAILROAD WYE

In spite of the diagrams, map overlays and photographs of the wyes in the museum, many guests still had questions about how a wye actually works.

At Bill Potthoff's request, members of the National Model Railroad Association, Mid-Central Region Division 2, built an operating model of a wye. Now that visitors can actually see an engine turning around on a wye, the docent can spend less time explaining how a wye works and more time emphasizing its economical and practical advantages over a turntable.



When space is available, a wye is more economical and practical to use in turning an engine around than a turntable.

**Thanks to Dick Flock, Rob Enrico, Ed Maier, Roy Ward, Terry Newell, Paul Boget, Don Reed, Jim Elster and Jim Sacco for this model of a railroad wye.*

THE MISSION OF THE LVRR Ligonier Valley Rail Road Association Organized in 2004:

To Preserve the legacy of the LVRR

To Conserve vestiges of the LVRR

To Collect memorabilia of the LVRR

To Educate the public about the history of railroading in Ligonier Valley

SIX RAILROAD OPERATIONS EXISTED IN LIGONIER VALLEY DURING THE EARLY 1900s

During the early 1900s, six railroading operations plied their trade in Ligonier Valley between the Connemaugh River on the north and Route 31 on the south. The railroad was growing in importance at this time because it provided the best way of transporting large quantities of raw materials and goods at reasonable prices.

The grandest of these six railroads was the Pennsylvania Railroad (PRR). It ran east and west along the northern edge of Ligonier Valley through Seward, New Florence and Bolivar. Over the years this railroad has experienced several reincarnations, operating today as the Norfolk Southern. On a daily basis more than 50 freight trains still pass through Ligonier Valley on the original PRR roadbed. Additionally, Amtrak leases the Norfolk Southern rails twice a day for one eastbound and one westbound passenger train.

Second in longevity was the Ligonier Valley Rail Road (LVRR), which carried both freight and passengers for 75 years and interchanged with the PRR in Latrobe. During its existence the LVRR transported more than 30 million tons of freight. Also, more than nine million passengers rode its rails.

The Pittsburg, Westmoreland and Somerset Railroad (PW&S), which traveled between Ligonier and Somerset, originally was solely intended to be a logging railroad, but was later pressured into adding passenger and freight service to accommodate the towns along the road. Its operation began in 1899 as a means of transporting logs of virgin timber culled on the Laurel Mountain above Rector to its sawmill southeast of Ligonier. The PW&S eventually interchanged with the LVRR at the Ligonier Station and the Baltimore & Ohio in Somerset. After the timber ran out, it became clear that passenger and freight traffic alone could not support the railroad. Consequently, the last run of the PW&S took place in 1916.

The Blair brothers of Indiana, Pennsylvania, owned and operated a sawmill in Kregar and laid tracks southward to Jones Mills where its rails interchanged with the Indian Creek Valley Railroad. On the northern side of the sawmill, the Blair Lumber Company built its railroad into the timber on Laurel Mountain and interchanged with the PW&S at the summit of the mountain. The operation pre-dates 1908 and continued in business through 1927.

In 1913, the Ligonier Lumber Company also built a logging railroad which extended from its saw-mill in Oak Grove into Laurel Mountain above Waterford. It transported logs harvested from the dense forest to its sawmill where the logs were cut into lumber. This lumber was then shipped south from the sawmill on the LVRR spur line and delivered to its warehouses in Ligonier. Although there was speculation that passenger service would be extended to the Kissell Springs Hotel in the Waterford area, this never happened. This logging operation was completed in 1919.

The Boswell Lumber Company also built a five-mile narrow-gauge line along Baldwin Creek from its sawmill south of New Florence into the foothills of the Laurel Mountains. While in existence from 1917 to 1920, the operation provided lumber for the Werder Coal Company, which, in turn, granted the Boswell Lumber Company the right to clear-cut the timber on Werder's property for one time only. The intent of the Boswell Lumber Company at that time was to build another line over the mountain to transport lumber to Boswell, but the expense of that project made the endeavor infeasible. The entire operation simply moved its base to Boswell.

Three of these six railroads were incorporated to harvest the timber on Laurel Mountain and were short-lived operations. By adding freight and passenger service to its line after the timber was gone, the PW&S managed to extend its life for a total of 17 years. Only the LVRR and the PRR continued to provide economic impact in Ligonier Valley for any length of time.

2010 ANNUAL DINNER PREEMPTS GALA

After several successful galas, the board of directors of the LVRRA opted to forego the 2010 gala. A number of factors influenced the decision, but the most important was the hugely successful annual dinner held at the Darlington Station on May 20, 2010. The board felt that any subsequent event at the museum in 2010 would be anti-climatic. A decision regarding future galas will be made next year. Friends who feel strongly about the subject should contact a board member to convey their opinions.

COLLECTION POLICY ADOPTED

The LVRRA board of directors has established a protocol for accepting or declining future donations to the museum. A committee will determine the relevance of any given item to the mission of the LVRRA and its museum. Each donated item will be documented and accepted subject to the review of the museum committee. If the donated item is not relevant to the LVRRA or to the era of the LVRRA (1877 — 1952), it will be returned to the donor.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Friends forever —in memorial

**Jack Emery
Tom Miller**

**LVRRA'S WEBSITE
WELL WORTH A VISIT
www.lvrro.org**

The LVRRA invites Friends and the public to visit its website, which continues to expand and improve. Updating the website for the LVRRA is an ongoing process for webmaster Bill Potthoff. Recently, Potthoff upgraded the LVRRA equipment roster not only to improve the accuracy of the data but also to add relevant photographs from the archives.

Local railroad historians have verified the information on the roster and believe that it is the most complete and accurate compilation of LVRRA equipment that has ever been put together. Readers are invited to visit the website and to review this newly revised roster.

History buffs will also enjoy reading excerpts on the website taken from newspaper articles that were written during the time that the LVRRA was in operation. This is possible thanks to one of our volunteers who scanned the microfilm copies of newspapers for relevant articles, transcribed excerpts into digital format, and then forwarded them to Potthoff, who uploaded the information onto the website. Readers may access this file by clicking the "history" tab.

On the same site, by clicking the "new" tab, readers are able to access current information about LVRRA activities. Additions and corrections about the website may be made by calling the office at 724-238-7819 or e-mailing info@lvrro.org.

ARCHIVING IS A PROCESS

Staff members Susan Shaffer, Frank Dominick and Bill Potthoff have been busy archiving the LVRRA collection of artifacts, memorabilia and photographs. By using PastPerfect, a software package designed specifically for museums, the staff is creating a data-base, which will be used to record information about each item in the LVRRA collection and its location.

The team, in cataloguing the collection, first photographs each artifact and then assigns a number that encodes the date of acquisition and the source. All relevant information about the item is then entered into the database. Periodically, copies of recent entries are printed and filed in the office for easy access. Visitors who are interested in researching specific artifacts may review any of the printouts relevant to their research.

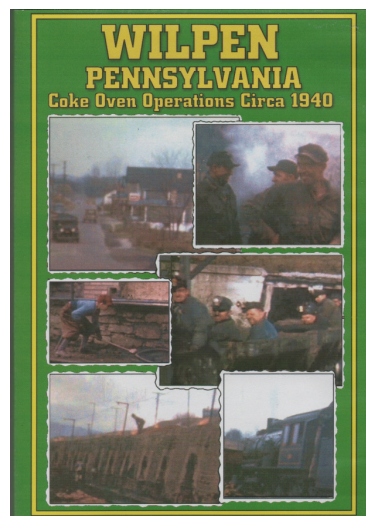
To date, 1500 items have been catalogued, approximately one-half of the LVRRA collection. Most of the remaining collection to be catalogued includes memorabilia and photographs.

This more tedious project of scanning and cross-referencing the photographs will be a winter project. When the project is completed, a staff member ideally will be able to locate a specific photograph of an engine, a piece of equipment, an event, a person, etc., upon request.

UNIQUE GIFTING OPPORTUNITIES AT THE LVRR MUSEUM

NEW THIS YEAR — CHILD-SIZED ENGINEER CAPS IN BOTH PINK AND BLUE, WOODEN TRAIN WHISTLES, AND LVRR CABOOSE TEES

Don't forget that the LVRR gift shop is a great place to shop at Christmas time. Local history buffs, for example, might enjoy the 15-minute DVD about coal mining and the coke-making process in Wilpen during the 1940s. The DVD, narrated by Pete Picadio, the original cameraman, documents the industry in his hometown.



The above DVD in color is available at the LVRRA gift shop.

Anyone interested in logging might enjoy *Stemwinders*, a book about the logging industry in Westmoreland County at the turn of the 20th century.

The gift shop also offers original artwork by Friend Lynn Byers, who paints images of the restored Darlington Station on slates removed from its original roof. The slates are signed by the artist and numbered.

Commemorative LVRR model-train cars in both O and HO gauge are also available for sale as is an O gauge doodlebug that calls out the stations between Latrobe and Ligonier.

These items and many others, including a gift membership to the Friends of the LVRR, are available in the museum gift shop at the Darlington Station or online at www.lvrra.org.

RECENT CONTRIBUTIONS

Thanks to all contributors for the following items that have been donated to the LVRRA since the last Liggie publication:

Harry Albert

1911 LVRR pass, issued to Marcus Saxman (*incorrectly credited to Dick Flock in the September Liggie*)

Wayne Confer

Laminated map of the Conrail system

John (Jack) Emery

Assorted railroad memorabilia, including a switch lock, PRR placard, and a walnut model of a locomotive

Ed Gross

Original photograph of Doodlebug approaching Longbridge, circa 1940

Cyrus Hosmer III

Copies of photographs taken at LVRR's Last Run, the Wilpen wreck and the Idlewild Station

David Hunter, Jr.

Copies of photographs of LVRR's Last Run and of the promotional flyer

William Irwin

Conductor's cap and badge and a photograph of George Louis Burns, who was employed by the PW&S, LVRR and PRR

Ray Kinsey

Bucket of railroad spikes recovered from the LVRR roadbed

Dale Laughlin

Kingston to Idlewild ticket stub dated August 1919

Gene Melago

PRR railroad lantern inherited from his grandfather John S. Melago

Howard Mewherter

Assorted railroad memorabilia, including timetables and clippings

W. C. Wallace, Jr.

Railroad advertising memorabilia, including letter openers, key chains and pencils

Memorial Contributions In Memory of

William Murray

by

**Robert Wagner
and
New Kensington High School
Class of 1960**

E-VERSION OF THE *LIGGIE*

If you prefer to access the newsletter in electronic format rather than to receive a hard copy, please notify the office at 724-238-7819 or send an e-mail to lvrra@verizon.net.

CALENDAR OF 2011 LVRRA EVENTS

March 2 — Spring Schedule
April 16 — Field Trip
April 30 — Layout Tour
May 20 — Annual Dinner