

# The LIGONIER

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## Penn-Ligonier Railroad Club

By Ray Robb and Bill McCullough

The first article in a series of articles on the Penn-Ligonier Railroad Club.

The origin of the “Penn-Ligonier Railroad Club” was in an garage on Depot Street in Latrobe, next to the terminus of the Ligonier Valley Rail Road. William D. (Bill) Smith (see photo) lived in the home there and began a collection of railroad artifacts which is the nucleus of the Ligonier Valley Rail Road museum’s collection now housed in the Darlington Station.



Denny Piper (conductor) and Bill Smith 1952

The historic Ligonier Valley Rail Road was a people and materials mover important to the citizens of the Ligonier-Latrobe area. Bill, who lived adjacent to its tracks not more than fifty feet from the southern leg of the railroad’s “wye” (where trains can be reversed) was inspired to build an HO model railroad.

At the time, Bill worked for the Pennsylvania Railroad as a switch tower operator, working mostly at the DR tower in Derry. Whether his employment generated his interest in model railroading or whether it existed from an earlier time cannot be said, but he was motivated to begin construction in the two-car wood-sided garage behind his home.

Its beginnings go back to the 1930s. There is some question whether it began as HO or OO gauge. HO was just beginning and did not have much of a following as yet. Early mainstays of the model railroading hobby, such as *Model Railroad Magazine* and the National Model Railroad Association (NMRA), were also just starting up in the 1930s so there wasn’t a lot of guidance or standards to direct these early modelers.

In any event, HO became the gauge for Bill’s model railroad which consumed a portion of one bay of his garage. It was probably a simple oval with some yard tracks to hold the layout’s cars. Apparently, some of his friends with a similar interest in model railroading helped him with the construction while enjoying its use. Since it was so close to both the Pennsylvania Railroad (PRR) and the Ligonier Valley Rail Road (LGV) they called it the Penn-Ligonier Railroad.

# Penn-Ligonier Railroad Club Continued

In 1947, the Penn-Ligonier Railroad Club was officially organized with the adoption of a constitution and bylaws. There were seven people who signed the original document and are considered the charter members. Of course, since the layout was Bill's and was located on his property, he played a huge part in its organization and operation.



*Penn-Ligonier Railroad  
Club Layout ca. 1948*

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## Do You Have Any Information About This Item?



We currently have the original ticket dispenser that was in the Darlington Station but we don't know what date it could have been produced or anything else about it. The dispenser is pictured below:

The plates on the dispenser read:

“Bacon's Patent,” American Railway Supply Co., New York.

If you know or can find any information about this item, please let us know by sending an email to [info@lvrra.org](mailto:info@lvrra.org) or calling us at 724-238-7819.

We currently have over 3,000 items catalogued and are now going through the collection gathering more information on some items where we have the provenance but haven't identified uses for some or dates.

We are still cataloguing more items and photos.



## 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 [info@lvrra.org](mailto:info@lvrra.org).

## CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

If you would like to volunteer at the museum, stop in or give us a call @ (724) 238-7819 to discuss available opportunities.

## 2014 MODEL RAILROAD HOUSE TOUR

The date for the Model RR House Tour for 2014 will be May 3, 2014.  
More information to follow.

## MEMBERSHIP DUES

Notifications were sent to “Friends” whose memberships have expired. If you haven’t sent in a renewal by October 15, this will be the last issue of the “Liggie” that you will receive.



*The Liggie is published quarterly  
for Friends of the LVRR.*  
Mimi Owens, Co-editor  
Bill Potthoff, Co-editor

## CALL FOR STORIES AND FEEDBACK

- If anyone has any photos, maps, stories or other information about the Ligonier Valley Rail Road, please give us a call at 724-238-7819 or send an email to [info@lvrra.org](mailto:info@lvrra.org). We would love to hear from you. Thank you.
- If you have a problem with the new version of the “Liggie,” please let us know. As you know, we changed the method of mailing starting with the last two issues; so instead of mailing in an envelope it comes in this format with the address pre-printed. This reduces our costs for envelopes, stamps, and time in stuffing about 500 copies.

### DAY OF GIVING 2013

Thank you to all of those who gave during the Westmoreland Day of Giving. The amount raised in direct donations has totaled \$1800.00. A letter totaling the donations plus the matched amount from the Pittsburgh Foundation will be sent to all participating donors.

### RECENT CONTRIBUTIONS

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

**Ron Maxson**  
Railroad spike

**Paul Fry, Jr**  
Chamber pot from Central Pacific RR

**Linda Boxx**  
Trolley bench (circa 1900)



## CONTACT INFORMATION

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# The Pittsburgh S-Gaugers 10th Anniversary Celebration Overview

By Jon Knox

The Pittsburgh S-Gaugers recently celebrated their 10th year as a club by visiting the Ligonier Valley Rail Road Museum.

The group attended a talk by Bill Potthoff on the 1912 train wreck on the Mill Creek branch of the LVRR. The interesting talk was well received and all were impressed with the Association's efforts to restore the former Darlington station and the creation of the outstanding museum. After Bill's presentation, Mary Bush entertained the visitors with her storytelling of 1940s coal mine and coke oven operations as depicted in the Wilpen video. The visitors appreciated the restored bobber caboose and the displayed railroad items from a bygone era. The visit concluded with a group photo taken on the caboose followed by dinner at Carol and Dave's Roadhouse in Ligonier.

The Pittsburgh S-Gaugers is a southwestern Pennsylvania S-gauge model train club. S-gauge is the size of trains known to most people as American Flyer. They were manufactured by the A.C. Gilbert Company after WW II until 1966. The American Flyer line is still being made under new

ownership and there are presently many other companies making S-gauge trains. S-gauge trains run on two-rail track and are larger than HO and smaller than O-gauge trains.

The club's members express their interest in S-gauge trains in several ways. Some collect and operate vintage American Flyer trains only. Others add compatible, modern production rolling stock. Still others mix modern production models with assembled kits and/or scratch-built models and modify them to be as realistic as possible. Regardless of approach, the members enjoy creating displays for their model trains to run on. Club members often show their trains to the public at area train shows such as the Greenberg's Train and Toy Show, the Carnegie Science Center's-Locomotion Weekend, and the LVRRRA's annual model railroad home tour.

Although it's been ten years since "restarting," the club's "roots" extend back to 1963 and several members from those early days are still active. New members are always welcome and have come from all over the region ranging from Clarion, PA to Fairmont, WV.



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Ligonier, PA 15658

## MISSION OF THE LVRRA

*Ligonier Valley Railroad Association  
Organized in 2004:*

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- 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*
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*Find us on the web  
at [www.lvrria.org](http://www.lvrria.org)*



## Hours of Operation

11 a.m. to 3 p.m.  
Wednesday through Saturday

*Please consult the website for changes*

724-238-7819  
[info@lvrra.org](mailto:info@lvrra.org)

