

The Liggie

Published by the Ligonier Valley Rail Road Association for the Friends of the LVRR.

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Welcome aboard!

You have received this newsletter because you have expressed interest in the Ligonier Valley Rail Road. The LVRRRA organized in January 2004 to preserve the legacy of the LVRR; to conserve vestiges of the LVRR; to collect relics and memorabilia of the LVRR; and to educate the public about railroading in Ligonier Valley. Your support has been tremendous. We are planning a quarterly newsletter to keep our Friends informed and up to date regarding our endeavors. We also envision historical tidbits in each issue. Perhaps it will be a then and now photograph of remaining vestiges. Perhaps it will be the highlights of an interview with a former employee. Perhaps it will be a recollection of the railroad by you, one of our Friends. Regardless, the mission of this newsletter is to share information with the Friends of the Ligonier Valley Rail Road.

Friends of the LVRR

To date, there are 20 charter members of this Friends organization. Your mission is to enhance the efforts of the LVRRRA by undertaking research activities, archiving memorabilia and photographs, prepping artifacts for display, and manning our museum/library. Or, you may choose to simply support the organization by paying dues. There is an application included with this newsletter. You are eligible for charter membership if you join us by December 2005. Benefits to members include railroad-related field trips, such as a tour of the remaining LVRR vestiges or tracing the PW&S to the crest of the Laurel Mountain. Also included could be a Ligonier Day and train ride on the Walkersville-Southern Railroad near Frederick, Maryland. Members will also receive a discount on store items. On the other hand, your dues will help us to acquire future LVRR collectibles.

LVRRRA Board of Directors

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Bob Stutzman - Secretary/Treasurer 724-537-2647
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What's in a name?

There are several accounts where writers referred to the LVRR as the Liggie. It was a catchall term to include both the doodlebugs and the freight trains. Since Ligonier Valley Rail Road did not readily convert to an acronym, writers simply coined the word Liggie to use as an abbreviation when referring to the LVRR. Over time, it became a term of endearment rather than disdain. Therefore, as we strive to preserve the legacy of the Ligonier Valley Rail Road, this term of appreciation, The Liggie, will serve as the name of our newsletter.

Model Railroad Update

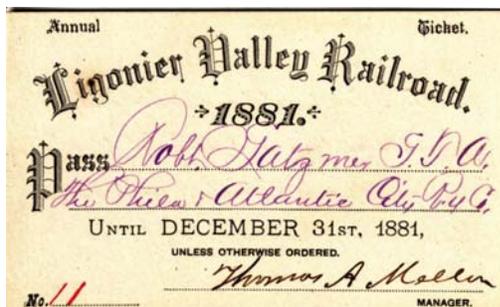
The "O" gage hobbyists continue to support the endeavors of the Ligonier Valley Rail Road Association. To date, we have manufactured and sold eight pieces of rolling stock (four boxcars, three hoppers and a caboos). The next commemorative LVRR issue is a Tank Car, # 1916, which will be available by the end of June 2005. You will be able to purchase the tank car at the Chamber of Commerce Office and Zimmerman's in Ligonier and at PostNet in the Latrobe 30 Plaza. There is also a limited supply of the cabooses in stock. You may also mail order these items by e-mailing lvrra@verizon.net or phoning 724-537-2647. The price for each is \$50.00, plus \$5.00 shipping. The model of Engine #19 is still on schedule for September. We have received orders for ninety engines and are having an additional twenty produced. So, if you forgot to order one, there is still time.

Fantastic News

We have acquired the railroad artifact and memorabilia collection of Russ Lowden, Latrobe. His father-in-law, Bill Smith, had initiated the collection back in the forties. There are numerous LVRR photographs, relics and memorabilia in the collection. The majority of the collection has been gathered and stored awaiting further cataloging, cleaning and restoration. The collection was purchased with money from the sale of model trains and with the help of the Richard King Mellon Foundation. It will be a great asset to our museum. More to follow in future issues.

More great news

We now have a store-front/mini-museum/library in the professional building at 106 North St. Clair Street in Ligonier. Currently, we are setting up shop to archive and catalogue the "paper" portion of the Lowden collection. In the near future, we plan to have regular hours, probably nine to noon, Saturday morning. Right now, we are trying to get caught up with the initial sorting of the collection. We have also secured a glass cabinet to display a small portion of our LVRR relics and memorabilia.



Recent acquisition

We located and purchased a LVRR pass dated 1881, just four years after the first run. It is in mint condition and signed by the founder of the railroad, Judge Thomas A. Mellon.

Riding the rails

More than 100 Ligonier Valley Rail Road fans enjoyed a virtual ride on the railroad Sunday, June 5th. Bill McCullough and Bob Stutzman, assisted by Bill Potthoff presented the latest version of their slide show, "Come Along With Us and Ride the Ligonier Valley Rail Road." The program is available to clubs and organizations curious about local history. If interested, call Bob at 724-537-2647

Every month, the Ligonier Historical Society has been including a "Did You Know...?" column in The Ligonier Echo. As written by Bob Stutzman, the following appeared in a May issue of the Echo.

Did You Know...

Did you know that the World Almanac lists Ligonier as the site of one of the major railroad wrecks in American history? Twenty-three people died July 5, 1912 on the Hannah's Run branch of the Ligonier Valley Railroad.

On that day, a double-headed train was southbound loaded with coal. At the same time, a full passenger coach was being pushed north to Wilpen by a single engine. Unfortunately, there is one critical bend in the Hannah's Run branch, at the northern end of Denny's Flat. On the inside of that curve is a hillside that had to be cut away to lay the track. In a quirk of fate, at that very point where the engineers' sight line is the shortest, the two trains encountered their destiny. When the engineers finally did see each other, the passenger train managed to stop. However, there was not enough time to stop the fully-loaded coal train.

One report described the accident, "The freight engines ploughed clear through the wooden coach, crushing it as if it were an eggshell." Local farmers and employees of the adjacent fairgrounds ran to the scene looking for survivors. Some ran into town to get help.

Carl Tantlinger, a former employee of the LVRR, recently related a conversation he once had with Denny Piper. Piper, the long-time conductor of the doodlebug, had assisted at the wreck aftermath. In later years, when training new employees, Piper would admonish them for sub-par performance by stating, "There is no allowance for mistakes. I never want to see bodies lined up again."

Merchandise for sale

Selected photographs, pullovers and hats are available. Visit LVRR.org or call 724-537-2647 for more information.

LVRR.org

As mentioned elsewhere, Bill Potthoff, our vice-president, is building a website to share the history of the LVRR and to keep readers up to date. Comments are appreciated.