

The Liggie

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

June 2011

Volume 7 - Issue 2

THE REMOVAL OF THE LAST LVRR TRACKS IS CURRENTLY UNDERWAY

On August 31, 1952, at the ceremony marking the Last Run of the Ligonier Valley Rail Road, one of its rails was removed to commemorate the end of an era of industry in the Valley. Within months, all of the LVRR tracks, tie bars, spikes, hold-down plates, etc. had been removed between Ligonier and Kingston and sold along with the engines for scrap.



Ceremonial removal of a rail commemorating the Last Run, August 31, 1952

The remaining three miles of track from Kingston to Latrobe were kept intact to service the Kennametal plant and other industrial complexes still located along the Ligonier line. This section of track continued in operation under the ownership of the Pennsylvania Railroad and later Penn Central and Conrail.

When the Kingston Kennametal plant no longer required rail service during the early 1990s, another mile of the original 10.6 miles was removed. Only the steel mills in Latrobe

continued to use the two-mile rail service. Once Vulcan Mold went out of business and Standard Steel (currently Lehigh Special Metals) began to use an alternate access to rail service, only Latrobe Steel continued to use the line. Its last shipment was made in 1996 when the company sold a used piece of equipment and shipped it by rail to a seaside terminal for reshipment overseas.



Photograph of the last "last run," taken in 1996 by Bill McCullough

Fifteen years after the abbreviated Ligonier line was last used to transport goods, the remaining track is finally being removed to make way for a walking path.

During the 75-year history of the LVRR, nine million passengers rode these rails, and more than 30 million tons of freight were hauled over them. Although the tracks will soon be gone, the legacy of the LVRR will continue to live on through the efforts of the LVRR Museum.



Made by the Carnegie Steel Company in 1909, these 102-year-old rails were removed near St. Clair Street in Latrobe in May 2011.

2011 FIELD TRIP TRACES THE ABANDONED LVRR ROADBED BETWEEN LIGONIER AND LATROBE

LVRRRA's spring field trip on April 16 followed the original roadbed of the Ligonier line between Ligonier and Latrobe. In spite of the stormy weather, 13 Friends of the LVRR traveled in a caravan of cars to explore the route.

The tour first stopped at the entrance to Idlewild Park where a bridge built for the LVRR is still in service for automobile traffic. From this vantage point, participants were able to observe the sites where the Millbank Station and Crescent Pipeline pumping station once stood as well as the roadbed of the siding to a clay quarry north of Route 30. During the three additional stops in the Loyalhanna Gorge, participants explored the quarry tipple, the Baker siding trestle abutments, and the battery of brick kilns.

At Kingston, the tour guide pointed out the sites on which the Kingston Station, the Soisson Brick Works and the original Peters Paper Company once stood. At the last two stops, Friends observed the partially dismantled Latrobe wye and the one-time Ligonier platform in Latrobe.

Pictures taken from the tour handout which bring to life the past along the line between Ligonier and Latrobe appear in the insert.

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THIRD ANNUAL MODEL-TRAIN TOUR SUCCESSFUL FUNDRAISER

The third annual model-train tour, held on Saturday April 30, was a successful fundraiser for the LVRRRA. Ticket sales exceeded \$3000 and the mobile gift shop grossed more than \$2000. Three hundred adults and 60 children purchased tickets for the seven-venue event. As a bonus, good weather made the day even more enjoyable.

Supplied with a map and the addresses of the hosts, ticket holders traveled at their own pace, spending as much time at each location as they liked. At each stop volunteer Friends greeted guests, directed parking, and assisted the layout owners.



Ken Perney especially enjoys sharing his layout with kids.

Ken Perney's classic "post-war" Lionel O gauge layout features a single loop with numerous sidings on which trains are parked when not in operation. Numerous interactive accessories, including a barrel loader and milk can un-loader, were especially interesting to the children, who were invited to operate them. In addition, Perney displayed his extensive collection of vintage trains on the walls around the layout.

At Joe Mastrococco's home, guests spent much time looking at the two 7 1/2-inch gauge locomotives and tenders, custom-built by Mastrococco and his son, Tony. The combined length of the larger engine and tender is 16 feet and together they weigh 2000 pounds. These "models" are working replicas of actual steam engines and capable of hauling several people. The

Mastroroccos machined to scale each component of these models from steel, bronze or brass, according to the prototype.



Joe Mastrorocco, in the center, explains to guests how he loves to tinker and to build trains.

The father and son duo also designed and built stands on rollers to move the engines about. One engine was mounted on a special roller device so that visitors could see the moving parts of the locomotive as it was driven by compressed air.

Dave and Betty Sheets, who create a different ceramic village layout every Christmas, graciously kept their 2010 edition intact for an additional four months in order to participate in the LVRRA layout tour. Because their 6 X 28 layout is in their living room, the Sheets deserve a special thank you for their inconvenience. One section of the layout modeled the North Pole and included a Polar Express train. Local vignettes and landmark buildings of London were featured in other sections.



Model trains meander through the ceramic village created annually by Dave and Betty Sheets.

Scott Graham's layout in Ligonier features high-tech Lionel and MTH trains operating on four loops of track. Graham's display proves to layout "wannabes" that existing space can be utilized to create an impressive layout. Lacking a large open area, Graham creatively designed his track to navigate between the furnace and the chimney in his basement. The end result is quite pleasing.



Scott Graham's Ligonier Valley engine produces much smoke.

In Derry, Shaun White operates trains on four levels, including one on a four-track line hanging from the ceiling. Although White runs trains from the 1950s, such as the Pennsylvania Railroad, he prefers present day trains, such as CSX and Norfolk Southern. Most of White's trains are Lionel.



Brennan Ward enjoys the action on Shaun White's layout.

In addition to his railroad collection, guests also enjoyed White's racing and hockey memorabilia.

Merwin Weed, a retired engineering professor who lives in New Florence, built an addition to his home to accommodate the layout of his dreams. The three-level layout can run 28 trains at one time, most of which are MTH. Guests marveled at the intricacy and enormity of the layout. In fact, Weed has to turn off the smoke units

on his trains because the amount of smoke generated by them triggers his smoke alarm.



The number of trains on Merwin Weed's layout makes a dramatic display.

At Huber Hall, Harold Kopp's N gauge layout appealed to many because of how much activity and scenery he has packed into a relatively small 40" X 60" space. It includes two loops, four switches, three bridges, six tunnel portals, 25 structures, and a scale-sized wind turbine like those in Somerset County.



The S-Gaugers of Pittsburgh also exhibited its traveling layout at Huber Hall. It includes two intertwined loops with interactive accessories that the youth enjoyed almost as much as the grownups demonstrating them.



A member of the S-Gaugers inspects carefully the operation of his club's layout.

The members of the S-Gaugers showed up in force so that they could alternate between operating their layout and visiting the other sites on the tour.

The modular layout of the Fort Pitt Hi-Railers held center stage at Huber Hall. Each module has a four-track line that connects to the tracks on the adjacent modules. Amazingly, the Hi-Railers were able to set up their extensive layout in approximately two hours Saturday morning. Individual modules of the Fort Pitt Hi-Railers' layout depict vignettes of life along the tracks, including a farm scene, a factory and a railroad cut through a ridge.



The expansive layout of the Fort Pitt Hi-Railers took up more than half of the available space in Huber Hall.

In addition to the hosts, kudos are due to the 41 volunteers who assisted at the seven venues and to the members of the layout committee who worked many hours to make the event run so smoothly:

Bret Pohland — Committee chairman
 Gladys Light — Volunteer coordinator
 Dick Sheets — Publicity coordinator

Dick Flock
 Bill McCullough
 Dave Somerville
 Jim Murdock
 Pat Slack
 Bob Stutzman

Layout photographs provided by Rita Giesey, Kathy Giesey and Huck Barras

(Additional layout photographs are included in the insert.)

LIGONIER COUNTRY MARKET AWARDS GRANT TO THE LVRRA

Annually, the Ligonier Country Market awards several grants to worthy causes in the area. Included among the recipients of the five grants awarded in May 2011 was the Ligonier Valley Rail Road Association. Its \$500 grant will be used to further enhance interest in the museum. Accolades to the Ligonier Country Market for its giving back to the Ligonier Valley area in appreciation of its patronage.

The Ligonier Country Market is open on Saturdays from 8 a. m. to noon from the middle of May through the first weekend in October.

UPCOMING LVRRA EVENTS

April 28, 2012 – LVRR layout tour

July 2012 – Mill Creek Branch field trip

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RESTORED MAIL BAG CRANE IS INSTALLED AT DARLINGTON

When the LVRRA acquired the Bill Smith/Russ Lowden collection of railroad artifacts in 2004, its focus was on the LVRR artifacts. Also in the collection, however, were items from other railroad lines, including lanterns, semaphore signals, railroad signage, and a mail bag crane.



With Bill Potthoff looking on, Bill McCullough and John Bialek install the mail bag stand at Darlington.

Of special interest is the mail bag crane, which was last used September 1953 in Larimer, Pennsylvania. After the crane was no longer used, the Pennsylvania Railroad donated it to Bill Smith and the Penn-Ligonier Rail Road Club.

The crane was designed to support a canvas mail bag between two arms so that a passing mail car could sweep the bag into the car with a scoop without stopping the train. Recently, after seven years in storage, the crane has been restored and erected on the Darlington Station platform.

Thanks to the ongoing support of individuals and foundations, the LVRRA will be able to continue the restoration of railroad artifacts to enhance the collection of the Ligonier Valley Rail Road Museum.

**NEW MEMBERS
SINCE March 1, 2011**

Hugh & Nancy Brallier
Mike Gerhart
Philip Grabowski
Cyrus Hosmer III
Douglas Leichliter
Michael Mesich
Bill Supancic

RECENT CONTRIBUTIONS

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

Jim Ference

Original baggage/freight dolly

Mike Gerhart

Original REA baggage/freight wagon and two large railroad wrenches

Tom Hunter

Original photographs of the Last Run, taken by Doris F. Hunter, Tom's mother

Ray Kinsey

Original oil painting of a railroad scene by Mary Martha Himler of Latrobe

Ray and Fran Robb

A library of 11 railroad reference books

Bob Stutzman

Original LVRR shipping receipts, dated 1896, and original REA shipping tag, dated 1941

John Vucina

Copy of photograph of the woolen mill in Rector

Friend forever – in memorial

Jeffry Williamson

**BERNADETTE RAMESDORFER
JOINS THE LVRRA STAFF**

The Title V program administered by the Westmoreland County Community College has enabled Bernadette Ramesdorfer to join the staff of the LVRRA as a docent. She is originally from Johnstown and has returned to western Pennsylvania after living in the Southeast for several years. A military veteran, Ramesdorfer is a student of history, who has traveled extensively. She presently lives in Greensburg. Welcome aboard!

E-VERSION OF THE LIGGIE

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

The Liggie is published quarterly for Friends of the LVRR.
Editor – Bob Stutzman
Associate Editor – Carolyn H. Dillon

LVRR MUSEUM IS RECIPIENT OF HAND TRUCK AND REA FREIGHT WAGON

As a result of recent contributions, the LVRRA intends to explore an additional aspect of railroad history, the Railroad Express Agency (REA), which was a nationwide corporation that managed freight shipments. Recently, Mike Gerhart of Donegal donated to the museum an REA freight wagon that he inherited from his grandfather, Robert Decker.



Measuring 40" X 120,"the REA wagon, once restored, will greatly enhance the railroad collection.



The REA logo at one time was recognized throughout the United States.

When the Garret Station in southern Somerset County closed in the 1950s and its contents were sold at auction, Decker bought the REA wagon. He then put it into storage in his coal-mining shop, where it remained until Gerhart donated it to the museum in April 2011.



Vintage photograph of an REA wagon on the Ligonier platform in Latrobe

About the same time, Jim Ference from Jeannette donated to the museum a hand truck similar to ones pictured in the LVRRA archives. Ference, a railroad buff, rescued it from oblivion when he pulled it out of a dumpster earlier this year. The hardware is intact and after cleaning will be usable. The wooden parts of the hand truck, however, will be replaced by using the original pieces as templates. Once restored, it will be displayed at the museum along with the REA wagon.



COAL AND COKE HERITAGE CENTER WELL WORTH A VISIT

Less than one hour from Darlington is an exceptional museum dedicated to the coal and coke heritage of this area. It is a testimony to the natural resources in the Ligonier to Connellsville region and to the men and women that played a major role in the development of the steel industry in Pittsburgh.

Five Friends of the LVRR recently visited the Coal and Coke Heritage Center (CCHC), located on the Eberly Campus of Penn State Fayette in Uniontown. Dr. Evelyn A. Hovanec, director of the center, led the members of the group on a tour of the museum and gave them a broader understanding of the significance that the coal and coke industry played in the prosperity of the LVRR.

Its website describes the CCHC as:

. . . an American Story—an epic story involving a series of events, technology and economic developments, the use and abuse of natural resources, the evolution of industrialization, and the power of ideas. But mostly it's the story of coal and coke and people.

The heyday of the Region spanned roughly the century from 1870-1970. During this period of phenomenal industrial growth throughout the United States, the Connellsville Coke Region fueled the blast furnaces of the steel industry in nearby Pittsburgh.



The Coal and Coke Heritage Center is indeed "A Mine of Information" and "A Portal to the Past."

More than half of the 30 million tons of freight hauled on the Ligonier line consisted of either coal or coke. At one time 22 active coal mines existed on the Mill Creek branch north of Ligonier along with six coke oven operations. Towns along that line, including Wilpen, Fort Palmer and Marietta, owed their thriving existence to the mines. At one time the population of Wilpen was even greater than that of Ligonier.

There is more physical evidence remaining of this boom time in LVRR history along the Mill Creek branch than along any other part of the LVRR line. Most of the roadbed is still discernible as well as the remaining ruins of four coking operations. Friends interested in expanding their knowledge of these industries are encouraged to visit the CCHC.

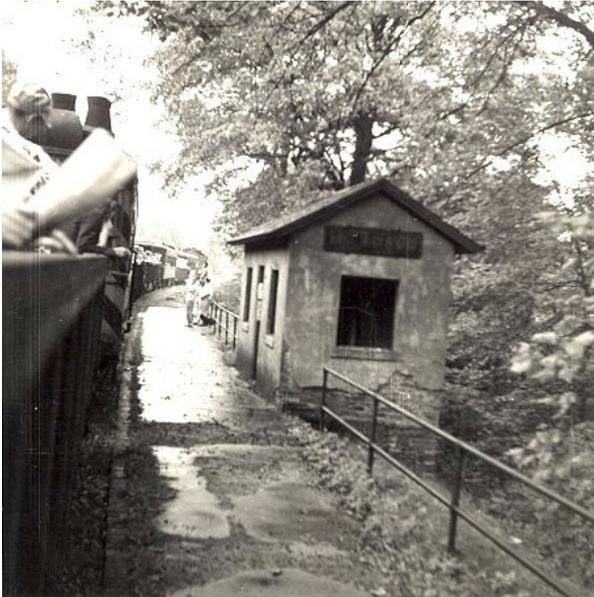
Contact information for the museum is:

*Coal and Coke Heritage Center
Penn State Fayette, the Eberly Campus
1 University Drive
PO Box 519
Uniontown, PA 15401
724-430-4158
www.coalandcokepsu.org*

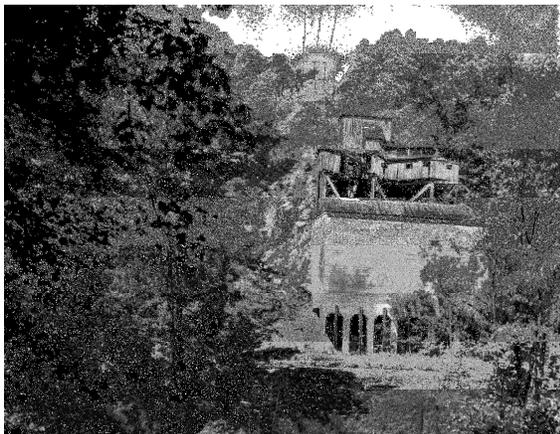
PHOTOGRAPHS FROM THE PAST ALONG THE LIGONIER LINE



The Deeds' farm and buildings of the Crescent Pipeline are visible in this photograph of the Millbank area.



The Millbank Station was located between the railroad tracks and the Loyalhanna Creek.



The north wall quarry tibble was abandoned soon after the railroad was shut down in 1952.



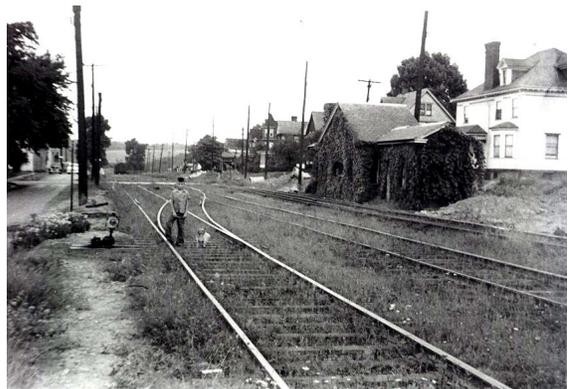
Bill Potthoff, current member of LVRRA board of directors, was on a Boy Scout outing when this photograph was taken of the Baker siding trestle around 1955.



This photograph of the Soisson brick yard, which was located immediately east of the Kingston Station, was taken in 1940.



Hillview Avenue grade crossing, circa 1920s (Latrobe Electric Steel Company is in the background.)



All bulk commodities shipped on the Ligonier line, including coal, coke and gravel, were weighed at this scale in Latrobe.

**THESE PHOTOGRAPHS
DOCUMENT LVRRA'S THIRD
SUCCESSFUL MODEL-TRAIN TOUR**



Elaine Dalton and grandson Harvey of Scenery Hill enjoy the ceramic village layout of Dave and Betty Sheets.



Shaun White's layout features model trains on four levels.



Ken Perney's classic "post-war" Lionel layout includes numerous operating accessories.



Harold Kopp's N gauge layout packs much action into a relatively small space.



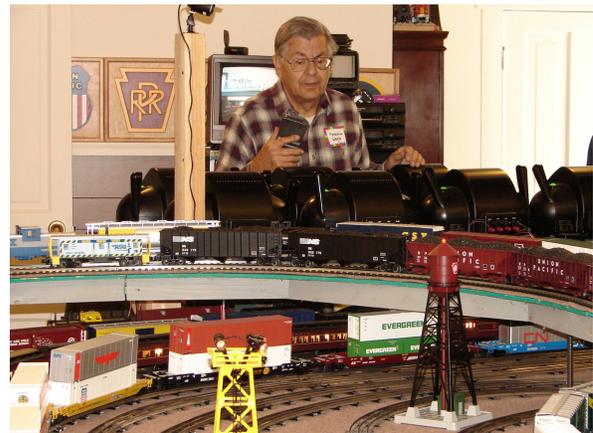
The people standing next to Mastrococco's Q-2 engine emphasize just how large these working models are.



All engines require a builder's plate.



Volunteers greet guests at Scott Graham's home.



Merwin Weed is an avid promoter of model railroading.