

# The Liggie

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

September 2009

Volume 5 - Issue 3

## GRAND OPENING PLAN EVOLVES

Plans for the grand opening are developing as the directors of the LVRRA continue to work on meeting the criteria outlined in the Pennsylvania UCC inspector's report regarding the Darlington Station.

Since the date of the occupancy permit is still in question, the official grand opening of the railroad museum at the Darlington Station has been set to coincide with the 2010 annual meeting of the Friends of the Ligonier Valley Rail Road, May 13, 2010. At that time the initial display of artifacts and memorabilia should be in place. The grand opening for the public will follow soon after.



*Trackside of the Darlington Station*

Meanwhile, the 2009 fundraising gala will be held September 26, 2009, at the station where attendees will be afforded a sneak preview of the future home of the museum.

As soon as the occupancy permit is issued, the mini-museum and office will be moved from St. Clair Street to the second floor of the station where the business side of the LVRRA will conduct operations.

Once the directors and staff move into the office and acclimate themselves to the new surroundings, they will determine the best use of the existing space on the first floor. Although many decisions have been made, many others must be agreed upon before the floor plan for the museum can be finalized.

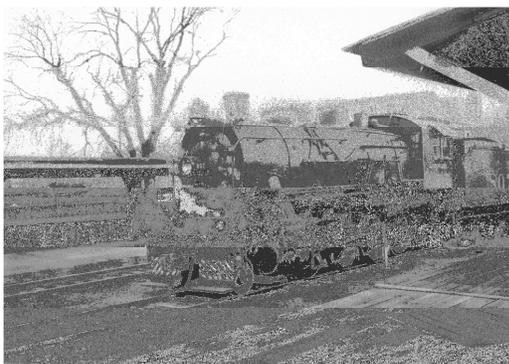
Everyone is anxious to move in; however, the directors have elected to move at whatever pace is necessary to guarantee a first-class museum upon its opening.

By adding a museum focusing on the 75 year history of railroading and heavy industry in the Ligonier Valley, the LVRRA hopes to attract railroad and history buffs from throughout the tri-state area.

## COME ALONG WITH US AND RIDE THE LIGONIER VALLEY RAILROAD VERSION 2009

Almost seven years ago, the first virtual tour of the Ligonier Valley Rail Road was presented to over 200 people, who crowded into the Ligonier Library on a dreary, wet November evening in 2002. The event was scheduled to coincide with the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Last Run of the Ligonier Valley Rail Road. During the intervening years, more than 1700 people have taken the virtual tour on the LVRR.

Over the years this PowerPoint presentation has been updated to include the formation of the Friends of the LVRR and the restoration of the Darlington Station. However, work has begun on a second presentation which will include all "new" photographs. The recently acquired work of Harry Frye, retired photographer and master of digital image enhancement, will serve as the foundation for the new presentation.



*Engine #807 at the Ligonier freight station*

Other photographs that have been added to LVRRRA's collection will also be incorporated into the 2009 edition of the virtual tour.

The premier presentation of the slide show will take place November 1 at 7 p.m. in the Ajar Auditorium at the Antiochian Village, followed by a second presentation November 3 at 7 p.m. in the Rogers Center at St. Vincent College. Both venues are equipped with the latest technology to make the virtual tour an enjoyable one.

Also, parking is plentiful at both locations. To help defray expenses, donations will be accepted at the door.



*Flour mill at intersection of LVRR and S. Market Street*

Everyone is invited to attend one of these totally new programs, which will not only present a nostalgic tour down memory lane, but also communicate the impact that the LVRR has had in this area.

### VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Once the museum opens, volunteers will be needed to sell tickets, work in the gift shop, and lead tours. If anyone is interested and has available time, whether it is an hour a week or 20 hours a week, please consider volunteering by calling Bill Potthoff at 724-532-5564 or any other board director. Hours of operation will depend entirely on the availability of volunteers to assist the newly hired archivist and docent, Frank Dominick.

### IMPROVING THE PROPERTY

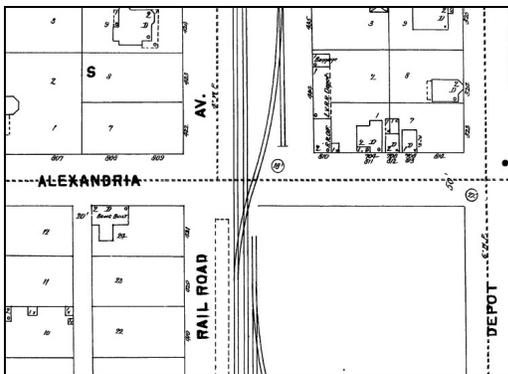
While addressing the inspector's findings (which focus on improving handicapped accessibility), the directors are also installing additional downspouts and replacing the door to the coal cellar in the basement in order to improve the infra-structure of the building.

## SANBORN MAPS AND CHARTS

Since for over a period of 100 years Sanborn maps were updated and published every couple of years, they are frequently consulted by history buffs who are studying the development of particular areas featured on the maps. According to *Wikipedia.com*:

Sanborn maps were originally created for assessing fire insurance liability in urbanized areas in the United States. These maps included detailed information regarding town and building information in approximately 12,000 U. S. towns and cities from 1867 to 1970.

Much of LVRR history is revealed on the Sanborn maps of the Ligonier and Latrobe areas. For example, one of the early maps indicates that when the LVRR began operation, the Latrobe Station was located at the intersection of Alexandria and Hoke streets. Another map shows that there was a second station in Ligonier during the summer months to accommodate Fort Ligonier Hotel guests. It was located on the property west of the present-day GetGo across from the fort.



*Sanborn maps are useful resources for the researcher who wishes to trace the progress of development in a particular urban area.*

The Latrobe Historical Society, as well as other agencies, have numerous issues of these Sanborn maps on file and invites visitors to explore these treasures. A future project for the LVRR is to scan the LVRR-relevant Sanborn maps and file them at the LVRR museum.

## PW&S FIELD TRIP APRIL 2010

Annually, the LVRRRA conducts a tour of local railroading history. Following the roadbed of the Pittsburgh, Westmoreland and Somerset (PW&S) Railroad up and over Laurel Mountain is the most popular of all the field trips LVRRRA offers.

Friends of the LVRR will return to the scene of the Byers-Allen Sawmill, whose lumber camps clear-cut the mountain above Rector from 1899 to 1910. Numerous bridge abutments are still visible along the right of way (ROW). Although traces of the PW&S are being reclaimed by Mother Nature, much of the ROW remains visible. Tour members will appreciate the monstrous task of building and operating this railroad.

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Bill McCullough - President  
724-238-5859

Bob Stutzman - Vice President  
724-537-2647

Bill Potthoff - Secretary  
724-532-5564

Art McMullen - Treasurer  
724-593-7277

Al Pilz - Director

Bill Stablein - Director

Pat Wallace - Director

Paul Fry - Director

Armour Mellon - Director

Janet Hudson - Emeritus

Lisa Hays - Emeritus

Ralph Scalise - Emeritus

## THE LIGONIER STATION IMPRESSED ALL WHO VISITED

The impressive granite building on Ligonier's West Main Street, which now is the administration building for the Ligonier Valley School District, originally served as LVRR's Ligonier station and headquarters from 1910 to 1952. While the building was under construction in November 1909, the *Ligonier Echo* described it as "possibly ... the finest and best equipped railroad station for any town the size of Ligonier or even much larger in the whole country."

It replaced the frame station built in the late 1800s, which was moved across the tracks to accommodate the construction of the new station. That building was then used as the Ligonier freight station and as the local depot of the Railroad Express Agency. Currently the school district houses its maintenance and repair shop in the former freight depot.

Typical of all railroad stations, the facade of the building facing the passenger platform and tracks was designed to make a grand impression on incoming passengers and, therefore, is considered the front side of the building.

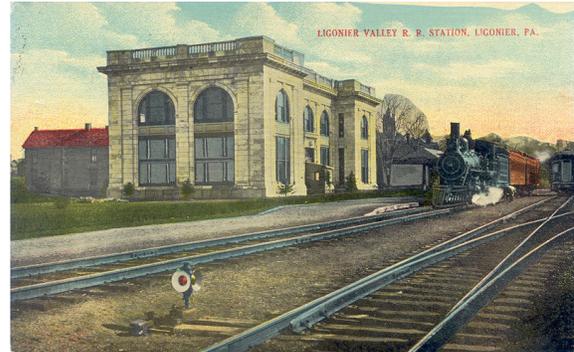
The view of the building from Main Street is actually of the back of the building. Although both sides appear initially to be identical, especially with their matching gargoyles above the doors, the entrance-way facing the passenger platform is set back, thus creating a more stately appearance.



*Ligonier Station gargoyle*

The interior of the station was quite spacious. The first floor included a ticket office, luggage room and three distinct waiting rooms, one for women, another for

men and a third (perhaps) for families. The LVRR offices and headquarters were housed on the second floor. The General Manager at that time, George Senft, had the corner office where he could look west toward Latrobe and north toward Wilpen. The basement was designed for storage and the furnace



*Recessed entrance at front of station*

The passenger station and the freight station were located on opposite sides of the LVRR main line. Since all Ligonier passengers boarded or got off the trains there, and all freight was loaded or unloaded on this section of track, the area bustled with activity. In the early years, steam engines would haul coaches to Ligonier, Pennsylvania's mountain playground.



*Hotel hacks awaiting incoming passengers*

Horse drawn hacks lined up at the platform to carry passengers uptown to one of the hotels for escape weekends or vacations. In later years, the hacks became motorized and also delivered freight to the local merchants and farmers. For a short time (1910 to 1916), the Ligonier Station served passenger traffic on the Pittsburgh, Westmoreland and Somerset Railroad (PW&S), thus adding to the activity around the station.

From 1910 to 1952 the building served the LVRR. It then became the headquarters for the Southwest Division of the Pennsylvania Game Commission. According to Barry Zaffuto of the Game Commission, the spacious lobby served well to display its collection of stuffed animals. However, as the commission grew in responsibilities, the offices became crowded. Additionally, its business (wildlife, tranquilized bears and dead animals) did not fit an urban environment. On March 19, 2001, having outgrown its quarters, the Game Commission swapped properties with the Ligonier Valley School District. The district extensively remodeled the old station before moving in and making it its central administration building. The station held in such high regard in 1910 remains just as impressive today. It is truly a Ligonier landmark and a lasting memorial to the LVRR.

**THIRD ANNUAL GALA  
SCHEDULED  
SEPTEMBER 26, 2009**

Invitations have been mailed for the third annual Gala. The directors are billing it as the grand opening preview of the Darlington Station, and they love a good party. Food, drink and music will be plentiful, guaranteeing a fun-filled evening.

Dave Byers will don his conductor uniform and greet arriving guests. Harry Cardillo, Steinway artist, and his trio will entertain guests with their repertoire of jazz and rag-time music. Dan Messmer will speak on his article entitled "Ligonier Valley Rail Road—Lessons in Business: Mentoring the Mellon Boys." Following the program, Terry Sabo of Ligonier will entertain the audience with his guitar and vocal arrangements. Ernie Vallozzi and his staff will cater the party, serving plenty of good food to go along with the drinks provided by Jim Mickinak.

If you have not received your invitation and would like to attend, please call one of the directors.

**CONTROVERSY EXISTS ABOUT  
EXTERIOR COMPOSITION OF THE  
LIGONIER STATION**

Some controversy still exists about what building materials were used in constructing the exterior of the Ligonier Station. Many question whether or not all of the blocks on the exterior of the building are solid granite. Although the building has the appearance of solid granite, the *Ligonier Echo* reported in 1909 that a combination of solid granite and granite-glazed terra cotta was used in the construction.

Glazed architectural terra-cotta was a very complex building material popular from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century until the 1930s. The terra-cotta blocks were comprised of hollow units hand cast in molds or carved in clay and heavily glazed, then fired. Ceramic architecture was used in the Wrigley building in Chicago, the Woolworth building in New York City, as well as numerous federal buildings. In such construction, solid granite was used in the lower levels while terra cotta blocks were used on higher levels. Compared to solid granite, the lighter weight terra cotta blocks were cheaper and easier to handle.



*The station as it appears today*

Based on the article in the November 24, 1909, issue of *The Ligonier Echo* article as well as the fact that ceramic architecture was a popular building practice at the time the station was being built, a growing consensus exists that the upper levels of blocks on the exterior of the Ligonier Station may not be solid granite even though all the blocks appear to be of the same composition.

**FORT DAYS INFORMATIONAL AND  
SALES BOOTH RELOCATES TO  
WEST MAIN STREET**

Over Fort Ligonier Days, LVRRA's information and sales booth, usually located by the St. Clair Street parking lot, will move to the property in front of the former Ligonier Station on West Main Street. It will share this location with a food booth vendor. The change is being made not only because of the historic railroad connection, but also because this spot proved to be quite popular with the crowd moving along the parade route from the parking lots. Hopefully, this location will provide our booth with access to a greater number of people than did our old booth located on East Main Street.

**FRIENDS OF THE LVRRA**

Although current membership in the Friends of the LVRRA stands at 300 members, the BOD would like to see that number doubled. By encouraging friends and family members to attend one of the upcoming events, such as the virtual tours, the field trips or the grand opening of the museum, Friends of the LVRRA should be able to spark further interest in the LVRRA. If each member were to elicit just one new member, the objective of doubling the membership could be accomplished.

**NEW MEMBERS  
SINCE JUNE 1, 2009**

William Burns  
Lynn Ferraro  
Walter Johnson  
Arthur Kistler  
Gary McMahan  
Thomas Miller  
William Murray  
Robert & Ina Smithley  
Melvin Swason  
Cheryl Wood

***Friends Forever – In Memorial***

***John Shutter***

**ARTICLE IN THE LIGONIER ECHO,  
DATED AUGUST 10, 1910, EXTOLLS THE  
BEAUTY OF THE NEW STATION**

The following excerpts are reprinted from an August 10, 1910, article in the *Ligonier Echo* and provide a contemporary view of the station:

One of the most beautiful and complete railroad stations to be found in Western Pennsylvania is the new and now practically completed station at the Ligonier terminus of the Ligonier Valley Railroad. This station is large, beautiful, complete, modern and convenient in every particular. Every detail of the building is the best and most modern obtainable. Cost has not been considered in the construction or equipment of building, to which has been added the greatest safety possible. The design of the exterior is grand and magnificent and of an imposing appearance.

When you enter you are surprised at the beauty of every part and the completeness of detail and the arrangement of every department of the interior. ... Waiting rooms ... are furnished in the most complete manner. A very fine and pretty tile floor, with painting and frescoing that harmonize, adds much to the appearance. Every item here is substantial and complete, making it one of the best and most convenient and comfortable railroad stations we have ever seen. There is no town in Western Pennsylvania has anything like it in cost and completeness. To get to the trains you will enter on the Main street side of the station and pass through to the overhead sheds to board the train.

The second floor is devoted to offices and other rooms necessary in the management of a railroad . . . Every office on this floor is furnished with the best and most complete furniture adapted perfectly to its use. There is also a room to be arranged for a library. The floor is hardwood in natural finish. Every part of the building seems just as it should be. Much to the care, study and experience of Mr. Senft, the general manager of the railroad, is due the beauty of construction and the convenience of detail of this magnificent Ligonier station. It is costly as well as beautiful and convenient. The cost will when entirely completed be from \$50,000 to \$60,000. It is a station of which the people of Ligonier valley and the owners of the railroad should be proud. Beauty and utility are harmoniously combined.

## RECENT CONTRIBUTIONS

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

### **Janie Matson Guyer**

Original photograph of engine #704 (from an unknown rail line) and its crew

### **Eileen and George Gerneth**

Two railroad lanterns

### **Carl Tantlinger**

Original *Latrobe Bulletin* dated September 2, 1952, covering the last run of the LVRR, and an original LVRR Time Table and employee handbook, dated April 26, 1925

### **Toni Polosky**

*The Horseshoe Curve: Sabotage and Subversion in the Railroad City*, by Dennis P. McInay, published April 2007

### **Staci Peipock**

Ongoing advertisement on Ligonier radio station

### **Pennsylvania Room of the Ligonier Valley Library**

Copy of a photograph of Judge Thomas Mellon (founder of the LVRR) with his wife and sons

### **Jim Mickinak**

Station bench from the Latrobe PRR station

### **Al Pilz**

Model train display case to exhibit the entire collection of rolling stock that has been sold by the LVRRA

### **John West**

Original railroad spikes recovered from the site of the 1912 LVRR train wreck

### **Harry Frye**

Panoramic photos of the 1935 entrance to Idlewild Park and a 1918 view of the Kingston Dam, which includes the LVRR Kingston Station

### **Eliza May Bacher**

Pamphlet dated September 1921, regarding The Ephrata and Lebanon Street Railway Company

## LVRRA HIRES FIRST EMPLOYEE

Frank Dominick will become the first employee of the LVRRA. He comes to our organization through the Title V program administered by Westmoreland County Community College. He will work with Secretary/Director Bill Potthoff to catalogue the memorabilia and archives of the LVRRA. Additionally, Dominick will help lay out the Darlington Station museum and develop a program for the guides and docents. He has been the assistant-innkeeper for the Compass Inn for the past two years and also an ardent supporter of the Saturday morning confabs at the LVRRA mini-museum. Welcome aboard!

## CALENDAR OF LVRRA EVENTS

September 26, 2009—Annual Gala  
October 9—11, 2009—Fort Days  
November 1, 2009—Virtual Tour  
November 3, 2009—Virtual Tour  
April 2010—PW&S Field Trip  
May 1, 2010—Model Train Layout Tour  
May 13, 2010—Grand Opening and Dinner

## THE MISSION OF THE LVRRA 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

## ACQUISITION OF MELLON FAMILY PHOTOGRAPH ENHANCES LVRRA COLLECTION

The story is well-documented and portrays the life lessons of a successful businessman and prominent citizen imparting his wisdom and business acumen to his sons. Under the tutelage of Judge Mellon, sons Richard, Thomas and Andrew gained business experience by actually establishing and operating a railroad. It was Judge Thomas Mellon's belief that his sons should learn a business from the ground floor up. Fortunately for the Ligonier and Latrobe area, Judge Mellon bought the Ligonier Valley Rail Road out of receivership and told his sons to build a railroad. From the ashes of receivership, the Mellon sons built a railroad that was a dominant element in the local business community for 75 years. From that early experience, they each went on to fame and fortune in their own right.



*Judge Mellon and his family*

*Left to right: Sarah Jane Negley Mellon, James Ross Mellon, Andrew William Mellon, Judge Thomas Mellon, Richard Beatty Mellon and Thomas Alexander Mellon*

Railroad historians agree that the story of the evolution of this short-line railroad is a phenomenal one because of the progress that radiated from it. And now, the LVRRA is the proud owner of a treasured family photograph depicting all of the people instrumental in the development of the LVRR.

This photograph of Judge Thomas Mellon and his family is from the estate of Helen Sedgley Mellon Schmidt, who was the daughter of Thomas A. Mellon, the man on the right in the above photograph. The photograph is part of the collection endowed to the Ligonier Library by her heirs. Mrs. Schmidt was a life-long naturalist, involved in birding, archeology and natural history. Among other accomplishments during her lifetime, Mrs. Schmidt was on the board at Powdermill Nature Center and the Pittsburgh Aviary. Her husband, Adolph Schmidt, was an American officer during WWII in the European Theater and eventually became the United States ambassador to Canada.

The LVRRA is pleased to be recognized by the staff of the Pennsylvania Room of the Ligonier Library and to accept this photograph of the founder of the LVRR and his family. The LVRRA will proudly display this gift in its museum for all its visitors to see.

## COMMUNITY VISIBILITY

The Ligonier Chamber of Commerce continues to generate ample opportunities for the LVRRA to share the history of railroading in the valley. Thanks to the volunteers listed below, the LVRRA's informational booth was manned during the Summer In Ligonier craft festival on July 24 and 25 and Antiques on the Diamond on August 22:

Marjorie Byers	Ruth Campbell
Ed Concus	Frank Dominick
Scott Graham	Jack Horrell
Rita Horrell	Tom Hunter
Gladys Light	Bill McCullough
Karen McCullough	Art McMullen
Staci Peipock	Bill Potthoff
Bruce Shirey	Bob Stutzman
Carolyn Stutzman	Sally Walker