

The Liggie

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

March 2009

Volume 5 - Issue 1

THE RESTORATION OF THE STATION IS NOW A REALITY

The restoration of the Darlington Station is complete. After Joe Bleehash of Foothills Architecture conducted his final walk-through inspection, JM Builders officially turned over the building to LVRRA representatives on February 16.



The passing of the keys

LVRRA's goal to restore the Darlington Station as accurately as possible to its original condition when the building served the Darlington community as a railroad station and convenience store has now become a reality.

Now the work begins to turn this historic landmark into a railroad museum. With this future objective in mind, the LVRRA incorporated into the restoration state-of-the-art heating, air conditioning and lighting. This modern technology will aid in the preservation of the books, papers and memorabilia and enhance the display of LVRRA's railroad collection. It will also better accommodate the staff and the number of people who will visit the museum over the years.

The result of this project is truly remarkable, and the LVRRA is anxious to share the museum with the public. At this time a June grand opening is anticipated.

THANK YOU!

A number of foundations and numerous individuals have made the restoration of the Darlington Station possible through their financial support. The LVRRA Board of Directors and Friends of the LVRR wish to extend their heartfelt gratitude to the following foundations:

ALLEGHENY FOUNDATION

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF
WESTMORELAND COUNTY

ELSIE H. HILLMAN FOUNDATION

KATHERINE MABIS MCKENNA FOUNDATION

LIGONIER VALLEY ENDOWMENT

MCFEELY-ROGERS FOUNDATION

R. K. MELLON FAMILY FOUNDATION

RICHARD KING MELLON FOUNDATION

WESTMORELAND COUNTY TOURISM BUREAU

Just as sincere is LVRRA's gratitude to the numerous individuals who have helped to make the restoration possible. Thank you one and all.

PREPARATIONS TO OPEN THE STATION BEGIN

Before furnishings can be moved into the station, an inspector must verify that the actual work completed matches the approved drawings required by the Uniform Construction Code (UCC). Once the UCC gives its approval, the Ligonier Township officials will issue the occupancy permit.

Between now and the time that the occupancy permit is issued, a committee will develop a floor plan for the placement of existing furniture and display cases within the museum, library, gift shop and upstairs offices.

When the permit is issued, furnishings from the mini-museum and other donated items, including filing cabinets and desks, will be moved in. Once these, along with the computers, are in place, the artifacts, photographs and memorabilia in the LVRRA collection can be catalogued, filed and/or displayed. Also, during this time the counter and shelving for the lobby will be constructed.

Fortunately, the LVRRA collection is extensive, including items such as: horns off the M-21 doodlebug; bells and headlights from LVRRA steam engines; numerous kerosene lanterns; hundreds of photographs of LVRRA employees and equipment; and charts and maps of the right-of-way and the industries supported by the railroad.

The collection is much more extensive than this list indicates and is continually growing. The long-term goal is to provide rotating displays in order to share the entire collection with the public.

Once completed, the counter and the shelving will be installed in the lobby and LVRRA merchandise will be displayed where dry goods once sat in the original convenience store. In addition, as a focal point, the original ticket dispenser from the Darlington Station will be located on the center shelf where it sat during the days of the LVRRA.

Although the physical restoration of the station is complete, necessary preparations to open it to the public will take extensive time.

SOLUTION SOUGHT FOR HIGH WATER AT STATION

On December 19, 2008, Mother Nature gave the LVRRA notice that the Darlington Station is located on a flood plane. As she unleashed enough water to submerge 18" of the basement, she reminded the LVRRA that nothing irreplaceable should be stored in the basement.

In order to alleviate future problems, directors of the LVRRA will attempt to determine the cause of the flooding and decide what course of action to take.

**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

**Ligonier Valley Rail Road Association
106 N. St. Clair Street
PO Box 21
Ligonier, PA 15658**

lvrra@verizon.net

**724-238-7819
724-238-7859**

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

**RETRACING THE STEPS OF THE
DARLINGTON STATION
RESTORATION**

For those readers who have not been with the LVRRA from the beginning, for those people who are just not good at remembering dates and details, and for all Friends of the LVRR and supporters, the following chronology is meant to serve as a reference to trace the restoration of the Darlington Station from its inception to its completion.

Inception

Ironically, the idea of the restoration of the Darlington Station originated before the LVRRA existed. At the request of the Ligonier Valley Library in November 2002, Bob Stutzman and Bill McCullough presented the initial virtual tour of the LVRR, "Come Along with Us and Ride the LVRR," to more than 200 guests, one of whom was Jerome Gibas, general manager of Idlewild Park. After the presentation Gibas told Stutzman that he would like to see the Darlington Station, which stood on Idlewild property, preserved.

When the LVRRA officially organized in 2004, Gibas' idea re-emerged, and casual conversations with Idlewild continued through 2005. Once the Richard King Mellon Foundation awarded the lead grant to begin the restoration project in November 2005, serious negotiations began between LVRRA and Pete McAneny and Brandon Leonatti of Idlewild.

Phase I Building Exterior

In October 2006, Idlewild donated the station and six-tenths of an acre to the LVRRA. By that time, the LVRRA had already developed a plan to restore the exterior and improve the property. That plan became known as Phase I.



The station in October 2006 when acquired

Phase I started with rebuilding the chimney and replacing the slate roof on the main building. Some of the trim had to be replicated and replaced. The exterior walls were stripped, primed and painted in the original color scheme. The side porch, which was unsalvageable, was totally rebuilt from the roof down.



April 2007 sans side porch

The foundation was re-pointed and the basement windows replaced. The rolled "tin" roofs on both porches and the addition were replaced.

Phase I Property



View of the platform November 2006

In addition, work on the property was ongoing throughout the restoration of the exterior. The land was cleared of brush and unwanted trees; the landscape reconfigured to accommodate the parking lot; the right-of-way and parking lot paved; the retaining wall repaired; and the concrete platform and steel handrail replaced.



View of platform July 2007

From November 2006, when the exterior restoration began, to July 2007, when the Phase I work was

completed, a remarkable transformation took place to the exterior and the grounds of the Darlington Station.



The station in November 2007 after exterior restoration

Phase II Building Interior

By May 2007, the LVRRA had already developed a plan for Phase II, the restoration of the interior of the station. It included fully insulating, re-plastering, and re-wiring the first and second floors of the station; reinforcing the floor joists to eliminate sagging floors; replicating and installing new doors, baseboards, and trim around all the doors and windows; painting the walls and ceilings; and laying new hardwood floors.



Daylighting the studs

Because of limited funds, Phase II progress moved more slowly. Intermittent work continued throughout 2008 as additional funds became available through donations and grants. By February 2009, when Phase II work was finally completed, the results were just as impressive as those of Phase I.



Lobby window wall February 2009

All the people who contributed to this project in any way, large or small, should be proud of their involvement. Once the station opens this summer as a railroad museum, it will attract railroad enthusiasts from far and near and will be an asset not only to the Ligonier Valley but to all of western Pennsylvania.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- April 4 - Field Trip
- April 25 - Model-train Layout Tour
- May 14 - Annual Dinner
- June (?) - Grand Opening
- September 26 - Gala

**LVRRA PLANS NEXT
FIELD TRIP
APRIL 4, 2009**

After the snow melts but before the trees bud is the perfect time to trace abandoned railroad right-of-ways (ROW). This year, Friends of the LVRR are invited to follow the Mill Creek Branch of the LVRR into the coal fields north of Ligonier and to explore sections of the ROW of an independent logging railroad owned by the Ligonier Lumber Company (LLC).

At the turn of the 20th century, the LVRR expanded its line to capitalize on the abundant coal reserves north of Ligonier. Known locally as the Wilpen Branch, the official name for this line was the Mill Creek branch.

At one point in time, during the 1920s, more than 20 active mines existed along the Mill Creek branch. Tour participants will be able to see remnants of tipples and sidings used to load the hoppers which transported coal to the Pittsburgh steel mills.

Some of the mines along the ROW were Fort Ligonier, Old Colony, Marietta, Tosh, Vogeles, Baton, Seger Brothers, and Hazelburg. Although the mines have been sealed for many years, physical evidence of them still exists today, along with many vivid memories of surviving miners.

Additionally, at least five coking operations were serviced by the LVRR. Although the coke ovens are gradually being reclaimed by nature, several of them are still visible from public roads.

Others are on private property, such as the ones on property now owned by Old Colony Sportsmen Association. Fortunately, a member of the club has agreed to lead the tour through its property to see the ROW and the remains of the tipple, wash tubs and coke ovens.

The tour will also visit the site of one of the worst railroad accidents in American history. Twenty-three people died when a double-headed coal train smashed into a passenger coach being pushed north to Wilpen. Viewing the lay of the land provides some insight as to how this tragic accident could have happened.

From the wreck site, the tour will travel into Oak Grove to see the first evidence of another railroading operation in Ligonier Valley, the LLC. It was built in 1913 when the LCC organized to clear cut the virgin hemlock forest off the mountain above Waterford. The LLC hauled logs down from the mountain to its saw mill in Oak Grove. Processed lumber was then shipped out on the LVRR.

The tour will assemble in the parking lot of the former Ligonier railroad station on West Main Street. The plan is to organize a caravan of vehicles at the West Main Street station. Most of the tour will be conducted from the comfort of the vehicles, which will be connected by CB radios. All the walking on the tour will be on level ground and no longer than a quarter mile at any one location.

The tour is for dues-paying Friends of the LVRR. Call the office at 724-238-7819 to ask questions and/or to reserve your spot in the LVRRA caravan to explore another segment of the industrial heritage of Ligonier Valley.

RECENT CONTRIBUTIONS

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

Carl Mattioli

Copies of LVRR news clippings from the Latrobe Historical Society's archives

Jim Cooper

Two oak-framed display cases

Tom Weimer

Starrett leveling gage

Rose Showalter

Original copies of a *Pennsy* and *Penn Central Post*

Albert Kovacs

Train Shed Cyclopedia Number 2

Ed Soisson

Framed photograph of a doodlebug at the Ligonier station

Ray Kinsey

Copy of the township, railway and post office map of Westmoreland County, dated 1894, and copies of a PW&S railroad pass and PW&S tickets

Jim Parker

Computer hardware accessories, including routers, printer, scanner and surge protector

Anonymous

Photographs of LVRR engines in the Ligonier yard

John Vucina

Photographs of a quarry and a stone crusher along the PW&S railroad

NEW MEMBERS

Since December 1

Gary Garrison

Patrick and Alice Loughney

John Parker

Toni Polosky

Bret Pohland

Pudge Pohland

Joshua Whetzel III

Welcome Aboard!

ANNUAL DINNER

May 14 is the date of the fourth annual dinner of the Ligonier Valley Rail Road Association, which will return to Pike Run Country Club in Jones Mills. Friends will receive their invitations by the middle of April.

Details are still in the planning stage, but attendees will be updated on the LVRRA activities which occurred since the last meeting, and recently acquired memorabilia.

Rumor has it that the LVRRA Ensemble will perform its updated version of the Doodlebug song.

ANNUAL GALA

This year's gala on September 26 will celebrate the opening of the railroad museum at Darlington. The LVRRA is pleased to announce that Armour Mellon will chair the event. More information will follow in the June newsletter. Building on the first two galas, the planning committee promises an even bigger and better experience this year.

**LVRRA SCHEDULES A
TOUR OF MODEL-TRAIN
LAYOUTS
April 25, 2009**

Most people associate model trains with Christmas-time. In years past, dad and his boys would spend hours putting track around the tree and running the train. If a boy was fortunate, he would receive a special piece of track, such as a crossover or a switch. Some boys lucky enough to have 4-by-8 sheets of plywood were allowed to build and run their layouts long after their Christmas trees were taken down.

Many of those boys have grown into adults who still love to play with trains. Some of them build year-round layouts and include all the "goodies" that they could not afford as a youngster.

On Saturday, April 25, you are invited to meet some of those "boys" when the LVRRA hosts its first annual model-train layout tour. Enclosed in this newsletter is a flyer inviting Friends of the LVRR and the public to this event. Six layouts will be available for you to visit at your convenience between the hours of 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Pictures of some of the layouts appear on this page.

