

The Railyard Local

Volume 7, Issue 8

-The Monthly Newsletter of the Danbury Railway Museum-

August 2008

Qualification as a Steam Locomotive Fireman

By Chris Locke

When I was a junior in college, I needed work to pay for my remaining 2 years of college. Summer work would be great, I thought. My college roommate had moved to South Africa to work for the S. A. R. firing steam locomotives, and that sounded like fun. So I drove to Essex to the Connecticut Valley Railroad, and saw a train waiting at the station.



The DRM's steam locomotive is a 100-year-old Boston & Maine Mogul on display in the railyard, and not operational. Chris relates his experiences on an operating engine.

I approached the engineer and asked "Do you know where I can find the Chief Engineer?" At this question the engineer smiled, and said "What do you need him for?" I said I wanted a job as a fireman. He called me up to the cab and said he was the chief mechanical officer, and that he had to leave. If I could wait an hour, he'd be back and we could talk.

An hour later, a very dirty engineer with a crumpled up little hat climbed down from the cab and introduced himself as J. David Conrad. He ushered me to the office, told me to fill out an application, and return tomorrow ready for work. Oh boy! The glamour! The fame! The prestige! Later these exasperations would turn to - The ash! The coal dust! The grime!

The next morning, I showed up in a cotton blue and white striped shirt, jeans, and black shoes. I parked in the employee lot, and walked into the shop to see Dave. Wow, two more locomotives, and one was in pieces. What big parts, what huge tools. I saw a man with thin rimmed glasses working on some round piece of hulk, who showed me to Dave's office. Dave said he would be the engineer that day again, and brought me downstairs to meet the fireman. As it

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New Members and Ten Years Ago

Happy Birthday Parties

DRM hosts celebrations Jan. - Nov.

We love hosting birthday parties! Our party guests are excited about the birthday occasion at our train museum, bring especially decorated cakes and additional decorations, usually with train themes. We can see that they are having a fabulous time, both inside and outside in the railyard. The additional excitement and energy of party goers transmits to our volunteers, who also sometimes are offered slices of birthday cake! Our party room has been busy, but there are times still available for booking parties this year. In addition to our pleasure in hosting groups, the birthday parties are an important source of funding for the Museum. **Please spread the word. Museum**



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Labor Day Weekend

Museum open, trains running all weekend

In keeping with our efforts to be open on holiday Mondays, the DRM will be open from noon to 3:30pm on Labor Day, September 1st. We plan to run our Railyard Local at 12:30, 1:30 & 2:30pm.

New Members

We are delighted to welcome our new members this month. All members, as well as the general public, are welcome to attend the weekly meetings and free programs held Wednesdays, 7:30pm, at the Museum, 120 White Street, Danbury. We invite all members to become involved in Museum activities as soon as possible!

Ronald L. Hatt	Colonia, NJ
Stephan Beaulé	Danbury, CT
Paula Cunningham	Fairfield, CT
Ralph Shanks	Novato, CA
Sandra Casey	Carmel, NY
Daniel P. Jowdy	Danbury, CT

Basic Training for Campers

By Steve Gould

On July 2, DRM Secretary Steve Gould spoke to campers at the Beach Park Point Association Summer Day Camp in Clinton, CT. The campers ranged in age from 3 to 12 years old. Steve talked about the DRM and basic railroading information, using photos, diagrams and audio tapes. The highlight of the talk was a demonstration of the Doppler Effect where Steve played a tape of a passing train blowing its horn as it passed the microphone. The talk was well received. Each camper was handed information about DRM, including a calendar of upcoming events. The Day Camp made a donation to DRM in exchange for the talk by Steve.

Running a Steam Engine

Steve Gould added a special video presentation to his program on Wednesday, May 28th. It documented his training on a steam locomotive in Williams Grove, PA, leading to his receiving a certificate.



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Ten Years Ago

By Stan Madyda

The Museum's August 1998 newsletter reported on the three day long event, "A Day Out with Thomas the Tank Engine®". It brought in over 10,000 visitors and delighted the Museum's youngest visitors with rides on Thomas the Tank Engine four-car train and the kiddie train, the mini-roller coaster, the two speeders in continuous movement, and a huge balloon named the Moonwalk. Other popular attractions were the petting zoo animals (including a llama), the Gift Shop with an outdoor tent extension, and the numerous food and beverages stands. An impressive 100 Museum members volunteered for the Thomas the Tank Engine weekend event, contributing to its great success. The event generated healthy revenue to cover the organizing expenses. We were also able to pay off the outstanding loan for the RS-1.

The Yard Work section of the newsletter reported on the windows being repaired on the N8A caboose PC 23662, by Tim Pipelow, while Randy Natale, Ed O'Lena, Ron Freitag, Reuben Thomas and Sam & Andy Paposki worked on the interior of the 23662 caboose. John Christy and Matt Ferrante worked on the side panels of PRR 477099.

Ira Pollack had stenciled letters on the X58A box car and also arranged for the transportation of the Central Vermont and New Haven flat cars to the Museum from Bullard Works in Fairfield. Lisi Towing from Brewster provided the flatbed trucks for moving these artifacts from a "weed and tree choked siding" to the DRM Railyard where they could be appreciated by the Museum's visitors. Members who had contributed to this expansion of the Museum's rolling stock collection were Dan Foley, Ron Freitag, Gerry Herrmann, Geoff Knees, Randy Natale and Tim Pipelow. The track speeder preparation for the event was done by Tom Blackman and Bob Andrews. Tom also worked with Joe Sanfilippo and Geoff in polishing up the paint on the Reading coaches and the Tonawanda Valley. Joe Ward and Nancy Sniffen continued their work on RDC 32. Other maintenance projects under way, following a major railyard clean-up efforts in July in preparation for the Thomas event, included the newly acquired flat cars and the double-ended crane.

Upcoming train excursions were publicized. There was a renewed call for volunteer involvement, as important then as it is today, in the many ongoing Museum activities, and a request for interesting train stories and photographs.

DRM Express Track

By Ira Pollack, President

Hope all is well with you this summer. As usual a lot has been going on at the DRM. I can tell you there is never a dull moment, that is for sure.

To start with, I have appointed Jeff Van Wagenen as the new Chief



Mechanical Officer. One of Jeff's first responsibilities will be categorizing and cataloging our equipment with the different mechanical issues that we have with each of them. Once we know what is before us, we can prioritize and proceed with an appropriate budget.

Some of this work can be done in-house, but some will have to be contracted out because of our lack of work



facilities and mechanical knowhow. In the past we weren't able to see our work load as a big picture, and hopefully this will be a valuable tool for our progress, mechanically. I wish Jeff well in this endeavor and support him in these new directions.

Work is proceeding on the SW-8 locomotive, fabricating new legs for the fan bearing pedestal. Skip Kern and Mike Miciukiewicz have graciously been helping Jim Poor fabricate and weld the new legs for the rusted base to the fan. Access to this area was difficult at best, requiring removal of most of the front of the locomotive, including the handrails, shutter assembly, and fan blade. Most of the hardware was original, so removal was almost impossible, but they did it with plenty of WD 40, heat and muscle. More to follow!



Also in the yard, Art Slothower has been diligently working on the CN 660, used as the DRM party car. To date he has primed both sides and one end, and has finished the roof. I must add that Art has done this work for the most part all by himself, day after day. I have much respect for Art's diligence and dedication to this project, and of course, to all the other projects that he has been involved with.



In other news, talking of dedication, Dave Roberts has repainted the semaphore shack and has taken upon himself to crackseal our driveway to the building. Dave, too, shows that dedication to our Museum and cause, and is highly commended by me.

By the time you read this, the DRM will have experienced its second "Railway Days" event. The main theme of this year's event will be to celebrate the history of the RPO cars, the #6563 in particular. This project was, and is, a success story for the Museum even right from the start. I say "success" in that this was a major pooling of our resources and volunteers all pulling together and making this car what it is today. I was there in the beginning, walking through the car during the winter, abandoned, with broken windows and left to rot away. I remember trying to close the doors and protecting it from further abuse. What really sold me were the remaining mail slots, or pigeon holes, that had not been vandalized yet. It was still essentially complete. I felt whatever it might take, I must try to save this car, and we must add it to our collection. The Housatonic RR generously donated, then transported it to the DRM. I had known of this car, but had never seen it, and in my wildest dreams never thought it would end up like it has at the Museum, restored. Look at what we did though! Look at what positive thinking can do! We should all be proud of this success story.

In closing this article, I will tell you I am very excited by our November 1st Fall Foliage Train excursion to Kent, CT. I am hoping for a good turnout of train buffs, DRM members and families for this unique excursion. The Museum is long overdue for this type of event, and I am hoping that you all will buy tickets for it. I know that the people in Kent and all along the line are excited by it, too. This will be a good exposure for the Museum and will promote tourism for the DRM and local region.

In this month's article I mentioned but a few of our volunteers. All our volunteers are the people who make us successful as a Museum. Please support them.

Happy Birthday Parties, Continued from Page 1



members receive a **\$10 discount** off regular party prices. **April - November parties** include: admission to the Museum & Railyard, use of the Party Room or tables set up outdoors under the station canopy, rides on a vintage train (cab ride for birthday child and 1 adult) and historic turntable, and 10% off party purchases made in our Gift Shop. Party fee is \$175. **January - March parties** include: admission to the Museum & Railyard, use of the private Party Room, 10% discount on party purchases made in our Gift Shop, and a locomotive cab ride pass for the birthday child and 1 adult. The pass can be used April - Nov and does not include Museum admission. Party fee is \$125. Fees provide for up to 12 children and up to 12 adults. Additional attendees receive \$1 off admission and the train ride (when available). A \$50 dollar non-refundable reservation fee is required at the time of the reservation. There is a \$25 surcharge to parties held during Special Events. Train, cab ride and turntable ride are subject to availability. Come celebrate!



What's Happening at the DRM



Top photos, CN 660 priming in progress, Jeremy Rice welding metal strips, and the primed, finished doorway; center level, one of several boxes for fire extinguishers created by Gerry Herrmann, Little Engine That Could (photo by Wade Roese), and spectacular cloud cover captured by Steve Gould; at bottom, one day's Little Engine crew (photo by Wade Roese), and trackage shot from the east end of the railyard. Back cover photo of John, Art, and Pete taken by Steve Gould.



Views from Trackside

From our vantage point at the DRM, we have an opportunity to observe and photograph activity on tracks adjacent to ours. Below are some examples of recent trackwork, trains, and railroad cars on our neighboring tracks.



1, 2, & 3) Housatonic RR replacing track and the crossing; 4, 5 & 6) Housatonic's GP-35s bringing the Carnival Train for its annual visit at the Danbury Mall, traveling over the finished crossing; below, a Maine Eastern car on our lead track; 7) F-10s on Metro-North; 8) FL-9 in service on Metro-North



NYC Transit at the DRM

July 15th visit videotaped; to air in August

New York City Transit's television program, *Transit Transit News Magazine*, an Emmy Award winning show, will include footage from the DRM visit during the month of August. As shown in these photos taken by Steve Gould, film crews interviewed DRM President Ira Pollack, and were treated to a cab ride in our RS-1. Unfortunately they did not have time for a turntable ride or to tour the entire railyard. They indicate that the program is shown daily on 30 cable stations in the NY tri-state area (incl. Cablevision & Time Warner) and broadcast on WNYE-TV Ch. 25 every Saturday at 3:30pm. It will also appear on the MTA website at MTA.INFO, then go to NYC Transit, and click on Transit Transit on the left side.



Qualification As a Steam Locomotive Fireman,

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turned out, the fireman for that day would be the man in the thin rimmed glasses: Bill Wolfe, the Valley Railroad's machinist.

The locomotive had already been made ready, and connected to the train, and Dave and Bill and I walked over to our posts. My first job was to sit on the fireman's seat box and watch. Whoa, this would be fun. Dave pulled an array of levers, Bill scooped coal, and turned valves. On occasion he would pull levers. There was a ker-THUMP, ker-THUMP, hissing, a constant whine, and we hadn't even started to move yet. So much to learn, so much to see, it was almost impossible to take it all in.

We finally got moving, and completed the run. That first ride was a blur of steam and sound. We spoke about the job of a fireman, his responsibilities, demeanor, clothing, and what training would be required before I could take the job. My first job, to learn how to use a coal scoop.

Little did I know that the practice I would obtain would not be shoveling coal into a roaring fire-box. Dave walked me over to the ready track, and showed me a pile of ash from the previous day's trips. He placed a truck tire on its side, then placed another tire on top of that one, positioned vertically, with the hole next to the track. What the heck was this for? Suddenly the movie *Karate Kid* came into my memory: wax on, wax off. Bill showed me how to hold the coal scoop, and shovel the ash from the track, through the tire, and into the ash pile. This was not the glamour I had in mind! This I did for almost an hour and a half. Wax on, wax off...

Later that day Dave came to inspect my work. We walked back to the locomotive where Bill started to show me the machine. This locomotive was brand new. "Hunh???" Yessir, this was a Mikado, made in China, in 1989, in the Tangshan Locomotive and Rolling Stock Works, class SY number 1647. It was a medium size freight locomotive. Wow, a new locomotive. What a place to learn!

You, the reader, may be wondering, what a fantastic memory. This day took place almost 20 years ago, and I remember it like yesterday. When was the last time you had an opportunity like this? It is something I fondly remember, the smell, the sounds, the entire day, in fact my 3 years at the VRR are an amazingly vivid memory.

(To be continued in the September newsletter issue)

Editor's Note: Many of you will remember enjoying Chris' articles in *The Railyard Local* describing his experiences on Sperry cars.



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MUSEUM CALENDAR

Aug	20(7:30pm)	Membership Open Meeting w/Pres. Ira Pollack and Board Members
Aug	21(7:00pm)	Board Meeting (Open to Members)
Aug	27(7:30pm)	Slides; Austral. Railways-Dan Foley
Sept	3(7:30pm)	Slides; Canadian National - Carl Liba
Sept	10(7:30pm)	Films; F. Schliegal - Joe Schiavone
Sept	17(7:30pm)	Misc. Slides - Pete McLachlan
Sept.	18(7:00pm)	Board Meeting (Open to Members)

Museum hours: Tuesday-Saturday 10-5pm; Sunday 12-5pm

See the newsletter in color at www.danbury.org/drm!



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