



The Westconn Manifest

The Monthly Newsletter of the
Western Connecticut Chapter of the
National Railway Historical Society



www.westctrhs.org

Since 1953

May 2005

Saturday May 7, 2005

Long Island - Sunrise Trail Chapter NRHS visits The SoNo Switch Tower Museum

Photo credit Roberta Ballard



Tony White greets about the group of 30 at The South Norwalk Train Station.

Photo Credit Robert Gambling



The group gathers at the Tower to begin the tour.

Photo credit Robert Gambling



Photo credit Robert Gambling

Half the group begins the climb to the third floor.



John Garofalo explains how the Tower operated and the function of the different color levers.

THE WESTCONN MANIFEST

is the official newsletter of the Western Connecticut Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society – (NRHS).

Articles which appear in

THE WESTCONN MANIFEST

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The Western Connecticut Chapter of the NRHS is separately incorporated as a CT not-for-profit corporation.

The Chapter is involved in the preservation of American railroad history and artifacts.

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The Chapter meets monthly, usually on the 4th Monday, at the United Congregational Church 275 Richards Ave. in Norwalk, CT or at the SoNo Switch Tower Museum 77 Washington St. Norwalk, CT at 8 P.M.

Meeting dates for 2005:

1/24, 2/28, 3/28, 4/25, **5/23***, 6/27*, 7/25*, 8/22*, 9/26*, 10/24, 11/28 and 12/19.

*Chapter meeting to held at the SoNo Switch Tower in South Norwalk, CT

The SoNo Switch Tower Museum is maintained and operated by volunteers of the Western Connecticut Chapter.

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www.sonotower.org

Ernest W. Miret

Longtime chapter member Ernest W. Miret passed away at his home in Port Richey, Florida on May 5, 2005. Ernie joined the West Conn Chapter in 1966 and was part of a colorful group of railroad employees that were members in the 1960's and 1970's.

Ernie had a long railroad career as a Tower Operator beginning with the **New Haven Railroad** in 1946 and continuing through **Penn Central** and **Conrail**. For many years, chapter members could visit Ernie at Norwalk Drawbridge (SS #45) and Westport Drawbridge (SS #52). An injury at work forced his retirement from **Conrail**.

Chapter meetings were enhanced by Ernie as he was Refreshment Chairman for approximately 20 years. To thank Ernie for his dedicated service, he was made an Honorary Life Member of the chapter.

Ernie is survived by his sister, a niece and a nephew. We extend our condolences to his family.



Ernie Miret (right) and Lewis Merrill at West Conn Chapter dinner in April 1992.

On Saturday April 23, 2005 the Delaware Valley Chapter - NRHS Visited the SoNo Switch Tower Museum.



John Garofalo leads the group from the South Norwalk train station to the Tower.

Photo credit Tony White

Photo credits Bob Gambling



Richard Carpenter was on hand to explain the functions the model board and the "68 Armstrong levers played during the time the Tower was in operation.



John Garofalo demonstrates how the Cos Co b Board worked and what the lights meant.

And of course, the best part! Railfanning!



Photo credit Tony White

The West Coast Wilderness Railway

By Robert Briechele

On my recent trip to Australia, I toured Tasmania with my Scottish traveling companion Matthew White who visited the South Norwalk tower in August two years ago with me—we each purchased a lever. After landing in Hobart, the capital of Tasmania (an hour's flight south from Melbourne) we drove to the north west towards Queenstown, an old mining town. Our focus: a ride on the West Coast Wilderness Railway a partially rack, partially adhesion railway that uses the Abt system for the rack. While the line runs from Queenstown to Strahan on the west coast of Tasmania, we rode only to the halfway point (end of steam operation).



Note the inside and outside cylinders, one for the cog (inside) the outside one for the "regular" drivers.

While the first cog railway in the world was the one up Mt. Washington in New Hampshire, it was the Rigenbach system that came into use elsewhere in the world afterwards. Swiss engineer Dr. Roman Abt was an employee with the firm that had designed and patented this form of rack railways. Finding that the design of the rack could be improved, offering better operating characteristics and less wear, he left the firm to implement his idea for an improved rack design and started his own company. Ultimately, his design, the Abt-system found wide favor.



A stop for water (the first). The cars are replicas of those used in the mining days but with steel sides, not locally grown wood.



Another stop for water. That's the fireman filling the tanks. (I am not kidding!)

As you look at the locomotives, you can see four cylinders, two driving the 'regular' drive wheels and two, on the inside of the frame, driving the cog that interacts with the rack. There are, as well, two regulators (throttles), one to control each mode of drive and the driver (engineer) can be seen fiddling with the regulators to adjust them both independently for the desired speed and power.

Part of the railway is simple adhesion—just steel wheels on steel rails—and part of it has the rack in the center between the rails. Interestingly, the transition to adhesion only to rack and adhesion both is made while the train is in motion and was not evident to me as a passenger in the first coach.

The railway was originally known as the Mount Lyell Mining and Railway Co. and had five of the doughty 0-4-2T's built by Dubs and Co. of Glasgow, the first (No. 1) in 1896, another in 1898, and the fifth and last by a successor company, North British Locomotive Co. also of Glasgow in 1938. The line operated for 67 years before being shut down when the economics of mining in that part of the world changed. The line lay idle for a number of years but, ultimately, a major infusion of state monies funded the rebuilding of two locomotives, the track, the bridges, etc. as a tourist railway somewhat like we have here in the States in Cass, WV and on the Mt. Washington Cog Railway in New Hampshire.

The restored 0-4-2T's use diesel fuel instead of the traditional 'Bunker C' fuel oil in the past, a conversion made in the 1950's. We ran at about 40km/hr (25mi/hr) from the start of the journey from Queenstown. Going up the mountain on the rack, one hears the 'ferocious bark' of four cylinders with varying grades, e.g. 12km/hr for 4.3km up a 1 in 20 (5%) grade, down the other side for 2.2km of 1 in 16 (6.3%). Coming down, the use of water brakes makes for a totally different sound and a rain of water expelled from twin exhaust ejectors on either side of the smokestack. I suspect it was mostly air in the cylinders with water added for lubrication and cooling. The same concept is used on the Mt. Washington Cog Railway where, incidentally, the grades are far steeper. But, then, their trains didn't pull cars laden with ore as on this railway.

Interestingly, a little British 0-6-0 diesel loco built by Drewry with a mechanical drive (i.e. side rods propelling wheels with counterweights) also operates on the railway. The locomotive was fitted out in the Queenstown shops to run on the rack railway with its own driven cog like the steamers. Also done at the railway shops is installation of a steam-era version of dynamic brakes by using pistons to compress air to retard the train's descent while injecting small amounts of water into the cylinders for lubrication and to dissipate heat. I don't know if this is the diesel cylinders or another set of special cylinders that ordinarily and independently drive the cog wheel. I expect the latter situation is what was done.

All in all an interesting step back into history, rather a cross between the Mt. Washington Railway and the Shays running at Cass.

Further information on the railway (and other options in the area) may be found at: www.federalresorts.com.au



A scenic stop after the climb, gives an idea of how rugged this country is. While much of Australia and Eastern Tasmania is very dry, the Western part of Tasmania gets quite a bit of rain, something like the same situation for Western Washington and Oregon vs. the Eastern part of those two states.

The Queenstown station, end/start of the line (which is the turntable itself).



Inside the shops with No. 2 undergoing repair. That's Matthew White near the coach (tall fellow) talking with one of the shop employees about the carriage (passenger car) under construction.



Add Austin passed along this old newspaper article.

BEDFORD WEEKLY MAIL
BEDFORD, INDIANA
FRIDAY, OCT. 19, 1900

Princeton, Ind., October 14. - Southbound freight train No. 57, on the Evansville and Terre Haute Railway, was wrecked 17 miles north of this city this afternoon. The engine stuck a calf and left the track.

Seventeen cars were piled upon the derailed engine. Four of them loaded with oil took fire and all the cars were burned, entailing a heavy loss.

Engineer PEARCE and Fireman SHORTS jumped and were only slightly hurt.

One car contained two race horses, H. M. C. and Emma, belonging to Mr. KINNEY, of Evansville. H. M. C. was killed outright and was burned up.

Emma had a leg broken and had to be shot. Four men on the train were injured as follows: Wm. DOCK, Evansville, collar bone broken and internal injuries; Thomas ENRIGHT, Richmond, Ky., arm broken; James ASLEP, New Harmony, Ind., hurt in the breast. The head brakeman is missing and is thought to have been burned up. The rear brakeman ran two miles to flag the Chicago limited and dropped in his tracks as the train stopped. He undoubtedly saved many people from death.



Add Austin took this photo just outside the Holiday Inn in Cumberland, MD at the Spring Directors meeting. It just doesn't get much better than this!



Western Maryland #734 ready for us to board for a special luncheon excursion.

Photo runby of WM #734 Coming out of the tunnel.



All photos by Add Austin



Photo of damaged wheel taken at the CSX repair shops.

Annual Chapter Dinner April 25, 2005

The Man of Many Hats

Several years ago at a chapter meeting an individual, a tall male, came to a chapter meeting. He sat in the back of the room, quiet as a church mouse. I notice he was a man of many hats. It seems he wore a carpenter's hat, a plumber's hat, a painter's hat, a glazer's hat, a mason's hat, a contractor's hat and all sorts of hats in the construction and builders trades. The SONO Switch Tower project at the time had gotten bogged down and this man of many hats came in and broke it loose. As we got to know this individual better I notice he wore other hats. In the culinary department he wore a chef's hat. He is famous for his steak and "coolar" salad. He has come up with great repasts many times at the drop of a hat. No pun intended. I am sure this individual wore many other hats. He was in the military in the past so he wore those hats then. But there is one more hat that he wore that I know of. This hat is of a seasonal nature worn only in December. See the adjacent photo and it is none other than our tower chairman, Jim Mescher.

Bob Gambling

Jim Mescher - "The Man of Many Hats"



Photo taken by Bob Gambling, framed, and presented to Jim at this year's annual dinner.

Photos by Bob Gambling



We were honored again this year to have William wood as our Guest speaker.



Lots of good food by Manero's!



And of course, good conversation and fellowship!

Westconn Schedule of Events

Monday May 23 - Chapter Meeting - SoNo Switch Tower Museum - 8PM
Entertainment - Dan Gallo Sr. slide presentation "Railroads of Maybrook"

Sunday - June 5 - 11th Annual Norwalk Harbor Splash Festival.
11am - 5pm Features: Hong Kong Dragon Boat races,
Chowder cook off, music & entertainment.

Monday - June 27 - Chapter Meeting - SoNo Switch Tower Museum - 8PM
Entertainment - Anthony Gruerio

Saturday & Sunday, Aug. 6 & 7 - The 29th Annual SoNo Arts Celebration.
Saturday, Aug. 6: 10AM - 8PM Sunday, Aug. 7: 11AM - 6PM
Giant Puppet Parade: 3PM www.sonoarts.org

Monday - Aug. 22 - Chapter Meeting - SoNo Switch Tower Museum - 8PM
Entertainment - Tony Fitzherbert

Monday - Sept. 26 - Chapter Meeting - SoNo Switch Tower Museum - 8PM
Entertainment - Ed Blackman

Friday Sept. 30 - Sunday Oct. 2 - Western Connecticut Chapter Fall outing to
North Conway, NH. Ride the dome railroad car to Crawford Notch on Saturday
and ride the Cog on Sunday. Only \$315 per person (based on double occupancy).
Payment must be received by Aug. 1, 2005. Contact Jim Mescher at (201) 391-7362



The Western Connecticut Chapter, NRHS Inc. supports Operation Lifesaver

Our Next Chapter meeting will be
Monday, May 23, 2005 at:
The SoNo Switch Tower Museum

77 Washington Street
South Norwalk, CT

Dan Gallo Sr. - Slide Presentation
Railroads of Maybrook -



Railroads featured (that went to **Maybrook** yard) will be the
New Haven (NH), Erie-Lackawanna (EL), New York, Ontario, & Western (NYO& W), Lehigh and
New England (LNE), Lehigh & Hudson River (L&HR), New York Central (NYC),
and in the 1908's, **New York, Susquehanna & Western (NYS& W).**

Bob Gambling will provide refreshments.

The SoNo (Railroad) Switch Tower Museum

is only open on Saturday's and Sunday's
April 30 thru October from noon until 5 PM.

Please help us show the Tower and how it operated to the public.

To volunteer, contact Jim Mescher at:
(201) 391-7362

or sign up at the Tower.

Thank you, your help is greatly appreciated.