

The Westconn Manifest

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



www.westctrhs.org

Since 1953

May 2006

Annual Chapter Dinner May 1, 2006 Celebrating Amtrak's 35th Birthday

Photos by Bob Gambling



This year's we held the event at The Waters Edge
At Giovanni's II
In Stamford, Connecticut

29 people attended the event.



The food and service were excellent!

There were door prizes and small gifts for everyone, most of which were donated by Amtrak.

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

do not express official NRHS position unless specifically noted as such.

Material from **THE WESTCONN**

MANIFEST may be reprinted in other publications, provided the credit is given.

Please address comments, any contributions of material, complaints and exchange copies of other chapter newsletters to:

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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.

Chapter Officers

- President : Buck Neulinger
president@westctnrhs.org
- Vice Pres. : Robert Westerfield
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- Secretary : Roberta Ballard
secretary@westctnrhs.org
- Treasurer : John Garofalo
treasurer@westctnrhs.org
- Nat'l. Director : Tony White
nationaldirector@westctnrhs.org

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 8:00 P.M.

Meeting dates for 2006:

1/23, 2/27, 3/27, 5/1 (Annual Dinner),
5/22*, 6/26*, 7/24*, 8/28*, 9/25*, 10/23,
11/27 and 12/18.

***Chapter meeting to be 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.

Western Connecticut Chapter - NRHS Inc.

77 Washington Street
Norwalk, CT 06854

203 246-6958

www.westctnrhs.org
www.sonotower.org

Special Reminder

The Next Chapter Meeting will be held at the:

SoNo Switch Tower Museum

At 8:00 PM

**April Volunteer Hours for
The SoNo Switch Tower Museum**

John Garofalo: 12	Janet Neulinger: 6	Buck Neulinger: 6
Jim Mescher : 12	Bob Westerfield: 6	Bob Gambling : 6
Tony White : 6	Roberta Ballard: 6	

Thank you!

To Volunteer call: 203 246-6958

We now have both Western Connecticut Chapter and SoNo Switch Tower pins for sale in the Museum Gift Shop
Cost is only \$5.00 each and members receive a 10% discount.

Tied to a catenary post

On the NHRHTA forum, a New Haven R.R. purest had said of the purgatory of being tied to a catenary post with eyelids sewn open having to watch an endless parade of Penn-Central trains on the Harlem River line.

I say, maybe being tied to that catenary post on the Harlem branch may not be a bad idea. I would give anything to see Penn Central GG1's, Alco FA's, 8600's, cabooses, the UA turbo train, all the fallen flag freight cars that are long gone today, etc. I'll even except a black EP-5 with the bird dropping paint scheme due to the fact that no EP-5's exist today.

We even had a few real freight trains then. I-95 was about 10 years old then and had serious impact on the railroad then but was not hopelessly clogged as it is today.

Bob Gambling

GREENWICH POST

He's got a golden ticket, to history

Mar 2, 2006

Al Brecken first learned of the New York, Housatonic & Northern Railroad in the 70s, but he didn't uncover artifacts from the ill-fated line until recently.

Local history buffs now have a little more information than they did before about the "lost" New York, Housatonic and Northern (NYH&N) Railroad, and they owe it all to "sheer dumb luck."

At least that's how Greenwich native Al Brecken, of Port Chester, N.Y., describes the circumstances by which he recently came across several artifacts from the NYH&N. The line was to have connected White Plains, N.Y., with Brookfield, passing through Danbury, circa 1870.

The line, which was never completed, would have run through the northwest section of Greenwich, and Mr. Brecken said it's still possible to see where land was graded for tracks.

Though he first heard of the railroad back in the 1970s while researching another line, Mr. Brecken, a self-professed railroad enthusiast and member of the SoNo Switch Tower Museum has kept the NYH&N in the back of his mind the last few decades.

While browsing eBay in the fall of 2004, he performed a search that turned up a group of five golden coupons that would have been given to people who invested in the ill-fated railroad. Later, had the line prospered, investors would have exchanged the coupons for the original amounts they put down, plus interest.

"I didn't believe it," Mr. Brecken said. "This memorabilia is almost 140 years old. I was astounded."

Even better was the price: Mr. Brecken said he paid a mere \$5 to win the auction. He donated three of the certificates to the Westchester County Historical Society and two to the Historical Society of the Town of Greenwich.

"I was fortunate; I recognized the significance," Mr. Brecken said.

While the tickets are a good find today, whoever was holding them in 1875 probably didn't feel quite as lucky, since the railroad went bankrupt that year, having never recovered from the Financial Panic of 1873, according to *The New York, Westchester & Boston Railway Company*, a book by Robert A. Bang.

According to Mr. Bang, the NYH&N became known as the "unopened gateway to New England." Builders had originally hoped the line would connect the New York and Harlem Railroad, which ran to White Plains, N.Y., with the Housatonic Railroad, which had a junction in Brookfield. The route, Mr. Bang said, made good economic sense: A key drawbridge over the Thames River in New London had not yet been built, meaning that goods passing between Boston and New York City often had to take combined rail-and-water routes.

The NYH&N would have offered an inland alternative, allowing shipping companies to bypass water altogether and earn higher profits.

Mr. Brecken, who is also a local authority on the Cos Cob Power Plant, said he walked much of the NYH&N rail path in the 70s when he first found out about it, tracing it through the woods across the New York-Connecticut line.

"Because it's in my backyard, I became very interested," he said.

That interest fuels his research to this day. Several weeks ago, he had a second lucky find on eBay: A subscription book containing the names of people who had invested in the NYH&N. This time, he paid \$9 to win the auction.

Although only two names are listed in the book, Mr. Brecken said the company must have raised a fair amount of money, as is evidenced by the considerable amount of work it did through Greenwich.

"They did have enough funding to do some construction through very formidable terrain," Mr. Brecken said.

According to Mr. Bang, six miles of track between Danbury and Brookfield were completed in 1868, but track was never laid on the NYH&N's 23 miles of graded land.



Kenneth Partridge photo

Given the railroad's fate, it's perhaps not surprising that little remains to remind people it ever was here. Mr. Brecken said he's not particularly hopeful he'll come across anything else, though he's said he'll continue to look.

"Memorabilia on that railroad is very, very scarce," he said. "It's not valuable in terms of dollars and cents, but it's very valuable in terms of scarcity."

Well aware of this fact, the Westchester County Historical Society said its very fortunate to have the gold coupons Mr. Brecken donated. They're the only artifacts from the railroad the society has in its collection.

"We're delighted to have them," said Executive Director Katherine Hite. "It makes our story that we can tell about this railroad more complete."

Amy Braitsch, curator of archives for the Historical Society of the Town of Greenwich, said Mr. Brecken's frequent contributions help the town better document its past.

"Mr. Brecken is a regular donor to the historical society's archives," Ms. Braitsch said. "His efforts to preserve history through his donations to us are much appreciated."

Mr. Brecken said he was glad to make the donation. He said he likes to know that other people will be able to look at and learn from the materials he finds.

"Whenever I acquire something of local interest, I give it to the historical society to share it with other people," he said.

Another way he plans to share his finds is through the Greenwich Public Library. This month, Mr. Brecken hopes to furnish a display case with old photographs of the New Haven Railroad, the NYH&N subscription book, and another item he just won on eBay: An 1838 stock certificate from the New York, Providence and Westchester Railroad — the first line ever built in Connecticut.

Mr. Brecken said he's always been drawn to old railroads because they're a glimpse at another time.

"It evokes the past," he said. "This was the pick-and-shovel days of railroad construction."

Mr. Brecken urged anyone interested in seeing where the NYH&N would have run to visit www.historical.maptech.com, where historical topographical maps of Greenwich, as well as other Connecticut towns, are available.

Board of Directors Meeting – Indianapolis, IN April 23, 2006
By National Director - Tony White

- The meeting was called to order and Rev. Howard Walker gave the invocation noting that several members have recently passed away
- Secretary Douglas R. White announced new Directors. No new Chapter Charter requests
- President Gregory Malloy gave appreciation to the Hoosierland Chapter for hosting an impressive weekend. He presented several themes. He gave an overview of the NRHS, including 140 active projects that are in various stages of involvement. Membership is asked to volunteer in various tasks to help. Without help, some services may not be delivered
- The Philadelphia office may need to relocate. The building owner is looking to convert the building into condos. They will have to buy the National out. They have other office space available and will pay for renovating the new site to National's needs and pay for moving
- Dues- no intention to increase dues, but the office situation may result in a one time hit in the dues
- Senior Vice President Barry O. Smith – worked with RailCamp, improving office equipment, and working with the memberships. Most chapters did their work very well. 75 Chapters were using the wrong address. The street address should be used. There are 18 boxes of back issues (last 3 years) of the Bulletin that can be given to Chapters for enhancements to entice membership. The tax exemption had expired in 2001 and this is in process. A member has volunteered to build a stand for a locomotive bell that had been donated.
- IT project – Barry Smith for Jeff Smith – The Bulletins will be in the same format as the yearbook starting with the next one (dedicated to Conrail) should be out around the Convention. Uncompleted issues are outsourced and will be delivered as completed
- VP Public Relations James Andrisen – ill. The Student Photo Sessions are going well. Looking for more involvement from Chapters.
- Comptroller Robert Heavenrich – The Maryland tax was filled. Received \$10k from the CFC program. Thanked Patrick Malloy for steering National towards this fund. The financial report was explained. The National was 25k in the black for 2005.
- General Counsel John Fiorilla – Doing office oversight. Working on insurance policies for RailCamp and the Conventions. Works on all contracts. Joe Williams working on convention contracts. The ALCO photos not resolved, but there is continued correspondence with the Mohawk and Hudson attorney's.
- Director of Membership Records Robert Ernst On-Board Report shows renewals as of April. Chapters will get a list of members to stop memberships in mid-May. The dues process is ongoing and there will be information available soon. The all time high in membership was in 1994 at 21,842. 2005 had 18,228 members. The Chapter information requests need to be completed by July 1st.
- Editor, NRHS News Extra Robert Ernst - next one May
- Membership Awards Joseph Maloney – there are quite a few pendants that lady members did not want as they preferred the pins. A couple of members have been overlooked and have been awarded their pins. There are several members qualified for 70 year awards. There was discussion and a decision will be made. The table plaque was not well received by the directors as “most of us don't have any space” our RVP William E. Wood suggested that free memberships be given for the rest of those members life. Chapters will be sent their Anniversary certificates in May
- Railway Heritage Grants Jack Salt - \$34k are available. The submission date is May 19th. No dues money goes into grants.

- Director Operation Lifesaver Wesley Ross – the number of trespass on rail property has increased by 3 to 485 it is raising every year. The number of crashes is down by 57 to 3010. Fatalities decreased to 375. Injuries at grade crossings increased by 85 to 970.
- NRHS Discount program Wesley Ross – 450 to 500 letters were sent to rail attractions and 160 organizations are participating. The list is in the NRHS News. Additional organizations are participating since the deadline. All attractions are listed on the website.
- Walter E. Zullig – Several positive decisions on rail photography have been declared. NJT declined to enforce their ban, but their police chief didn't get the notice for 2 months. The Bear Mtn. Bridge now allows photos to be taken from the bridge. The MTA in NY has no bans on their property. In LIRR needed additional prodding and now it is settled and photographers are allowed to take photos. CTA has no bans on rail photography. In Miami, the Wackkennut guards have been enforcing a no-photo rule that wasn't in existence. This has been resolved. Amtrak and BNSF are considering enlisting Railfans to assist them in watching for problems while allowing them to photograph trains.
- Emblem Sales – Sales for last year were slightly down. Sales at this meeting were high. Denim shirts and new pins are available. A gift certificate program is available starting at \$20. These will be available by the Convention
- Bill Kovac. Members are having books published and if publishers would discount books, then let the NRHS know so this can be passed on to membership. Screen savers are available.
- Nominating Committee Wallace Henderson – all RVP's attending this meeting have indicated that they will run for re-election. The RVP's should have assistants to help them and to prepare for the future
- Lynn Burshtin reporting for Mitch Dakelman. Several projects are in the works. He is working with documentary companies and making copies of films for people
- RailCamp Barry Smith – Steamtown has slots for 24 students. There are 6 candidates with disabilities. The children with disabilities have special needs and the NRHS is making sure that they have a safe environment and that the staff at Steamtown can handle these kids. 2 children have ADHD and another has no left hand. 8 students are seeking scholarships. There is \$2,200 in funds. 7 students have Chapter scholarships. 3 are on the waiting list. At Ely, there are 12 slots. 2 are taken and 2 more are expected within a couple of days. The adult RailCamp has 12 slots with 7 filled. Previous information on Chapters or individuals that gave scholarships is not available. 254 children have gone through RailCamp.
- The Operations Manual has been suspended. A member is volunteering to complete this. The National staff is working to make information more available to the membership.
- Information Technology – Working to solve membership records problems that have plagued the Society this past year. We can review and comment on the process.
- Malloy spoke of the need for volunteer staff openings. These will be posted on the website. A person is needed for grant writing and to follow through on leads.
- 2006 Convention - 800 registrations, 350 ticket sales thus far.
- Future meetings:
 - 2006 Annual Convention – New Philadelphia, OH. National sponsored
 - Fall 2006 Board of Directors Meeting – Huntsville, AL. North Alabama Chapter
 - Spring Board of Directors Meeting – Greenville, SC. Greenville Chapter
 - 2007 Annual Convention – Chattanooga, TN. National sponsored
- Proposed meetings:
 - Fall 2007 – Gulf Coast Chapter - Houston, TX
 - Spring 2008 – Central New York Chapter – Syracuse, NY
 - Fall 2008 – Chicago Chapter – Chicago, IL
- An At-Large member gave the Benediction.



An easy way for you to help your Chapter.

If you do on-line shopping you can earn money for The Western Connecticut Chapter
By going to either www.westctnrhs.org or www.sonotower.org and clicking on the Shop for Charity Day banner.

This will take you to their site and as long as you stay within this link - your purchases will earn a percentage of your purchase for the Chapter.

They have over a 1,000 stores listed. Just look for the store you want to shop from or browse through the list. The prices are the same as if you went their directly.

The only difference is that your chapter benefits from your purchases.

This is just a few of the stores listed on the site:

Office Max	Lands' End	Lillian Vernon	Target	Vermont Teddy Bear	Hallmark
CompUSA	Home DePot	Breck's Bulbs	Michigan Bulbs	Flowers USA	1-800-PetMeds

This site does not require you to give any personal information, nor are there any hidden charges .

Thank you!

Please contact Roberta Ballard at: 203 792-8558 or editor@westctnrhs.org if you have any questions or concerns.

Westconn Schedule of Events

Saturday & Sunday May 20 & 21 - SoNo Switch Tower Museum - 12:00 - 5:00

Monday May 22 - Chapter Meeting - SoNo Switch Tower Museum - 8:00 PM

Saturday, Sunday and Monday - May 27, 28 & 29 - SoNo Switch Tower Museum - 12:00 - 5:00

Saturday & Sunday June 3 & 4 - SoNo Switch Tower Museum - 12:00 - 5:00

Saturday & Sunday June 10 & 11 - SoNo Switch Tower Museum - 12:00 - 5:00

Saturday & Sunday June 17 & 18 - SoNo Switch Tower Museum - 12:00 - 5:00

Saturday & Sunday June 24 & 25 - SoNo Switch Tower Museum - 12:00 - 5:00

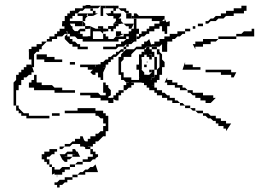


The Western Connecticut Chapter, NRHS Inc. supports Operation Lifesaver

Our Next Chapter meeting will be held at **8 PM** on
Monday, **May 22, 2006** at:

The SoNo Switch Tower Museum
77 Washington Street South Norwalk, CT

Add Austin will be presenting a slide show featuring
Rail related photos of
Eastern North America, GA, NC, CT, ME, CO, PQ, LAB, ON, MI,
and Narrow Gage Steam in Austria.



Bob Gambling will provide refreshments

The SoNo (Railroad) Switch Tower Museum

is open on Saturday's and Sunday's
April 29 thru October from noon until 5 PM.

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

To volunteer call: (203) 246-6958 or sign up at the Tower.
Thank you, your help is greatly appreciated.