



The Westconn Manifest

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



www.westctnrhs.org

Since 1953

August 2004



SoNo Arts Festival 2004 brought many new visitors to the Sono Switch Tower Museum



Photos by Robert Gambling

Please check out the chapter web site at:

www.westctnrhs.org
it has a new look!

We now have new e-mail addresses to make it easier for you to contact us:

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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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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 : Anthony Gruerio, Jr.
Vice Pres. : Robert Westerfield
Secretary : Buck Neulinger
Treasurer : John Mount
Nat'l. Director : Tony White

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 2004:

1/26, 2/23, 3/22, 4/26, 5/24*, 6/28*, 7/26*,
8/23*, 9/27*, 10/25, 11/22 and 12/20.

*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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Once again this year - Westconn members volunteer to help out at "A Day Out With Thomas"

The event is the major fund raiser for the **Railroad Museum of New England** and chapter members Dana Hunt, Charlie Albanetti, Ed Holowinko, Lincoln Sander, Tony White, Dana Laird, Jeff Fruithandler, and Roberta Ballard were there to help wherever help was needed.

The event took place in Waterbury, CT. on Aug. 6, 7, 8, & 13,14,15 and our Dana Hunt is: The Magic Conductor sprinkling his magic gold dust to put a big smile on all those who attended.



National Director Musings August 2004

Tony White

- Ø Our insurance policy is now current and paid through April 2005. The new company then claimed that we didn't meet their minimum requirements and sent out a cancellation. I sent a letter to the company with information about our use of the building, its security, frequency of occupancy and it's openness to the public. With this, the policy was reinstated without any lapse in coverage. The current policy provides better coverage than the first policy and costs ½ as much.
- Ø The website committee consisted of Charlie, Roberta and me. After careful consideration of our needs and options we decided to change web-masters, upgrade the Chapters website, and add a website for the Tower and save \$400 in the process. Charlie is the webmaster. He is doing a wonderful job creating the sites. We will have email addresses for the officers, editor and any others in positions for the Chapter.
- Ø Running a train trip has become very difficult because of the situation in which we live. Due to 9-11, insurance costs have doubled, rider ship has fallen, and advertising is higher. The trip routes we could run have been done so there is nothing new to entice passengers. Metro North has gotten back into the excursion business. Since we face these difficulties, it appears to not be feasible to sponsor a train trip unless we can find a partner with another organization to share the costs, risks and profits. However the possibility to make some money for the Chapter still exists. Roy has been added to the Trip Committee due to his experiences of running bus trips.
- Ø Next year we can make some money for the Chapter if we can get enough people to volunteer at the Thomas the Tank event over the two weekends. The Railroad Museum of New England will make a nice donation to the Chapter if we can bring in enough people.

This Month's Book Review:

New Haven in Color Volume 2: The Struggle for Survival

By Geoffrey Doughty

This is an all-color book on the **New Haven** covering the period from 1955 to the early **Penn-Central** era.

My favorite railroad locomotive is, of course, the **FL-9**. This book has a lot of excellent shots of **FL-9's** in action. My favorites include a westbound duo with an 8-car train below the Connecticut Turnpike in Bridgeport, a single **FL-9 (#2023)**, at the Bridgeport Station with a westbound. Also 2 photos from the early **Penn-Central** era. One has 2 units with **New Haven** paint & **Penn-Central** numbers (**5057 & 5012**) with a seven car train at Glenbrook. The other photo features **FL-9 #5054** on a southbound at Chappaqua, New York on the former **New York Central Harlem Division**. Following the **New Haven's** merger into **Penn-Central**, some of the **FL-9's** were diverted to **Harlem Division** usage.

Another favorite **New Haven** diesel of mine is the **GE-U25B**. My two favorite photos feature them operating in trios on the **Maybrook Line** with a mixed freight and **Shore Line** piggy-back train.

My favorite **New Haven** electric engine is the **EF-4 Virginians**. The **New Haven** had twelve. They came from the **Virginian Railway** in late 1963; hence their nickname. I have 4 favorite shots of them from this book.

The 1st is a meet of the **Virginians** at Harrison, New York. The 2nd is a **Virginians** coupled together at **Cedar Hill (#300 & 305)**. Number three is an action shot eastbound at New Rochelle, New your. And the last is a westbound freight at Bridgeport.

So in conclusion, I will say that this is an excellent well-covered book about the **New Haven's** operations, until the very end. Among the photographs featured is the late **T. J. Donahue**. I would highly recommend this book not just to New Haven fans, but for modelers and Rail Historians as well.

Respectfully Yours,
Robert Sposato

Trainfest 2004

By Joe Harper

I have had the pleasure of recently participating in three photo specials involving steam equipment and track owned by the Ohio Central Railroad System. These days it is very difficult to have a chance to see operating steam and be able to ride and video it doing its magic. The Ohio Central is the current "Mecca" for us railfans to enjoy vintage railroad equipment run by folks who love railroad history and are doing their best to perpetuate it. When I first heard about "Trainfest 2004" in late January of this year I just had to make the time to attend this event.

The event was planned for July 30 - August 1 and the location would be Dennison, Ohio the site of a wonderfully restored depot that has a wonderful history all by its self. This location once was the site of a huge Pennsylvania Railroad yard that had three roundhouses and over 3,000 railroad workers. The depot was originally built in 1873 and once hosted 21 passenger trains a day. The Dennison Depot is equidistant from Columbus, Ohio on the west and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania on the east. During W.W.II the Dennison Depot Servicemen's Canteen hosted over a million and a half GIs traveling by train where they were served free food, coffee and friendly greetings from almost 4,000 volunteers. The GIs nicknamed Dennison "Dreamsville, Ohio." The depot was renovated and reopened in 1989 and is a wonderful testament to its proud history. What a wonderful place for a train festival!!!!

The Ohio Central Railroad is owned and directed by Mr. Jerry Jacobson who loved trains as a kid but initially didn't go into the railroad business but rather was in the medical business as a practicing anesthesiologist until the mid 1980s when he purchased his piece of track and begun to operate 100 carloads of freight over a 35 mile stretch. In 2003 the Ohio Central moved over 70,000 carloads of freight over 455 miles of railroad. Besides their roster of reliable locomotives they also have 10 steam locomotives, 25 passenger cars (painted in the Pennsy color schemes) and 16 historic diesels with some also painted in the Pennsy color schemes (burgundy with red and yellow trim).



I arrive at Columbus, Ohio on Wednesday evening and then early on Thursday drive over to Dennison, Ohio to scope out the layout. The layout is just fantastic with equipment on display mostly in a straight piece of track. There are six steam engines on display with three of them fully steamed up. 1293 (4-6-0 Pacific) and 6325 (4-8-4 Northern) will be handling the train trips. There are four one hour steam trips

each day, two three hour steam trips over to the Ohio Central Yard at Morgan Run, two round-trip train rides from Columbus to Dennison and return (14 passenger cars pulled one way by FP9s and then returned by 1293 on Saturday and diesel both ways on Sunday). In addition to these public trips there are two private trains that also come to this event. A special train comes from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania pulling 9 private cars and using vintage E8 power. These engines are also painted up in the Pennsy paint scheme and were built in 1951 & 1952. They are currently numbered as 5711A and 5809A and they look just magnificent as they sit on a siding and then as they leave town. There is one revenue trip available that goes from Dennison to Sugar Creek and return but it is scheduled at the same time I am riding from Columbus to Dennison so I miss that opportunity. There was also another visiting train from Orrville, Ohio pulled by a vintage diesel that had a short consist of 3 private restored passenger cars. I can't take advantage of this trip either because of the Columbus to Dennison trip but they look great sitting on a siding and then leaving town later on in the day on Sunday.



The weather is mostly sunny for the entire three days but at times there is heavy rain and lightening and at times some very high humidity but that doesn't seem to keep the folks away. The town of Dennison has a population of just under 4,000 but during "Trainfest 2004" approximately 27,000 folks show up to enjoy this rare railroad festival.

On Friday I drive over to Dennison and get there around 8 AM (festival opened at 9 AM) and found an easy place to park BUT the heavens opened up and it rained very heavily for about 30 minutes and tapered off. It was cloudy for the rest of the day but no rain. I rode the first one hour steam ride that headed west for about a 20 miles round-trip. It was pulled by 1293 and was a fun trip, it was mostly full and there were lots of folks out on the highways and cross roads chasing this train. The rest of the day I shot video of the equipment on display, the 1293 pulling her trips and then chased 6325 as she pulled a trip from Dennison over to her home at Morgan Run. It was fun to chase this engine thru the corn fields and small towns and I had lots of company along the way that was just as interested as I was to see this beauty strut her stuff along the way. There were 9 vintage diesels on display, one 200 ton railroad crane, one vintage passenger car, one caboose plus a fantastic display of operating steam miniature rail layout (1/8 scale) that must have traveled over a mile on a huge balloon track. I counted five of these smaller trains and they were pulling full passenger loads with lots of kids all three

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days. There was also "Gandy Dancer" demonstrations by the Buckingham Lining Bar Gang and though there are up in age they still put on a very enthusiastic and entertaining show. There were also lots of vendors selling railroad memorabilia, hats, T-shirts and plenty of railroad CDs and videos. The selection of food vendors was also very good and I must say as hot and humid as it got those ice cold and freshly shook lemonades and root beer floats never tasted better. I stayed at the Festival till 8 PM and then drove back to Columbus which is a distance of about 94 miles. I had no problem getting a good night's sleep.

On Saturday morning all I had to do was drive about 4 miles to the location where the round-trip train would depart from. The intention was to have the diesels (vintage FP9s pull our 14 car consist over to Dennison where we would stay for 4 hours and then steam would pull us back to Columbus. Originally the 6325 was to pull us back to Columbus but the host railroad rescinded that privilege as they thought the engine was too heavy for the railroad wye at Newark, Ohio so the 1293 had the privilege of pulling us back to Columbus. I was in car #704 that was built around 1920 and once was used for commuter service from downtown Chicago out to Aurora, Illinois. It is an open air car so everyone opens up their windows and enjoys the breeze as we head on down the tracks. This train is operated by the Ohio Central Railroad but the cars are hosted by the Ohio Railroad Museum and they do a wonderful job of helping us enjoy the trip. Once at Dennison I skip the lunch and head for a couple of locations where I can get some video of the 6325 that is pulling the one hour steam trips. At the end of the day we climb back aboard and enjoy the 1293 as she pulls us back to Columbus. As the engine is only three cars in front of me and with the windows up I get a wonderful ride that features very audible sounds of the steam whistle as the engine goes through intersections but also the loud bark of the engine as she moves up the inclines along the way. I also get lots of coal cinder souvenirs too as this engine as well as the 6325 are coal burners. We do stop along the way and do one runby and it goes very well but the 1293 is having some mechanical problems that will hurt us the next day. It has rained lots during the day so the field where we are parked is somewhat flooded so it takes some time to get out and back to the hotel but I enjoy a good night's sleep after a wonder day of railroad experiences and images.

On Sunday the weather is wonderful and I have the same open air car #704. These two trips have each sold out and there are over 700 folks on board each day. Originally it was intended that steam would pull us over to Dennison BUT when the train arrives we immediately know something is about to change. Seems that the 1293 has developed a leak in her firebox and it is decided to tow her back to Morgan Run for repair. We will be pulled for the engine round-trip by the Ohio Central FP9s. It is a bit of a disappointment not to be pulled by steam but the day is great and the trip goes very well. We go thru lots of towns and there are folks waving flags at us and kids waving at us along the way not to mention lots of folks out chasing our train along the way. We do stop and have a runby of the diesel and with the sun out she looks great as she comes blasting by.

As we arrive at Dennison it is extremely hot and humid but there are people everywhere. All the train trips are sold out. I again skip the planned lunch and head over to where the visiting trains are on sidings and getting ready to leave town plus the 6325 is also running the one hour trips so there is lots to see and take in. As part of the special train from Philadelphia one of the private cars is located mostly up in Minneapolis and is called the "Caritas." I recognize two of

the folks that work that car and we stop and chat for a while. This same car was up at Minneapolis and was used on one of the trips pulled by the 261 and then went from Minneapolis up to Portal, North Dakota behind the CP engine 2816. These two folks worked on those trips too and I have seen them many times before. There were enjoying their trip and were glad to get on board and not only head back to Philadelphia but also back to their home in Minneapolis in a few days. I also saw several members of the "261 Steam Team" from Minneapolis down at "Trainfest 2004" and they were having fun just being rail fans for a change.

I do get some nice video of the special trains leaving Dennison and also of the 6325 doing her magic but late in the day the 6325 also develops some hot bearing problems so she is taken out of service too. As the time nears for us to reboard our special train back to Columbus I am beginning to feel the effects of the humidity and heat so when it is time to climb on board I am ready to stretch out and enjoy the ride back to Columbus which goes very well. I got to the boarding point very early in the morning so I am on the first line to leave and that gets me back to my hotel in pretty good order. I have a wonderful dinner and think about all the images I have seen over the past few days and am really fortunate. My flight the next day is very late in the day so I can sleep in and just relax. I have participated in a wonderful event and the folks at Dennison, Ohio, the folks on the Ohio Central, the "Trainfest 2004" committee, the countless volunteers in Dennison and the volunteer hosts on both the trains have done a wonderful job of letting us walk back in time and help create some new memories to take with us as we return to our homes. I do hope this group does this type of even again and already there is some speculation that an even bigger railroad event may happen in 2006. I sure hope so as I will make every effort to be in attendance if another "Trainfest" is scheduled.

I just wish you all could have been along for the adventure.



Tower Volunteers for July 2004

Robert Gambling	54 Hours
John Garofalo	48 Hours
Jim Mescher	42 Hours
Buck Neulinger	24 Hours
Janet Neulinger	24 Hours
Bob Westerfield	18 Hours
Dick Carpenter	12 Hours
Anthony Gruerio	9 Hours
Roberta Ballard	6 Hours
Tony White	6 Hours
Tim Shields	6 Hours
John Miller	6 Hours
Janiell Neulinger	6 Hours
Dana Laird	5 Hours



Those who work also get to eat after the tower closes. For a small price to cover the price of the food you can relax and enjoy some fine food.

A very special **“Thank you”** to our
Tower volunteers!
Your time is truly appreciated.

These are the volunteers who man the tower during operating hours. Others volunteer their time in the background. We would also like to thank Jim Mescher for painting the steps and other maintenance, Tim Shields for electrical work and Al Brecken for his restoration work on the signal panel, just to mention a few.



The Sono Switch Tower Museum

We are only open on Saturday's and Sunday's
May 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.

The Western Connecticut Chapter, NRHS Inc. supports Operation Lifesaver



**Our Next Chapter meeting will be
Monday, August 23, 2004 - 8:00 P.M. at:
At The Sono Switch Tower
77 Washington Street Norwalk, CT**

Entertainment this month will be provided by:

Tim Shields

Bob Gambling will provide refreshments.

