



# The Westconn Manifest

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



www.westctrhs.org

Since 1953

November 2006



At the first Annual Banquet of the **Conrail Historical Society, Inc** are members from left to right:  
Tony White, David LeVan, Janet Neulinger, James Eisenhart, and Buck Neulinger

The event was highlighted with a very nice slide show by **Joe Jack** who worked with **Conrail** in the Conway yard until his retirement.

This was followed by the keynote speaker **David LeVan** former CEO of **Conrail**. His delightful talk highlighting his tenure as CEO was well received and afterwards, he entertained several probing questions from the members.



Member James Eisenhart received an award for his dedication and support.

The Conrail Historical Society is a non profit organization created to preserve the history of Conrail. The organization is headquarter near Harrisburg, PA. They now own a Conrail caboose and are trying to raise donations to move it to a permanent location.

**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  
 vp@westctnrhs.org  
 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 4<sup>th</sup> 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 7:30 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

October Volunteer Hours for  
 The SoNo Switch Tower Museum

John Garofalo : 48	Janet Neulinger: 18	Buck Neulinger : 18
Al Brecken : 6	Bob Westerfield: 12	Bob Gambling : 42
Tony White : 18	Roberta Ballard: 18	Dick Carpenter : 8
Anthony Gruerio: 12	Roy Hegret : 6	Bavet Hegret : 6
Dana laird : 10		

Total for October = 222 hours Thank you!

A very special to all that helped this season!

We now have Western Connecticut Chapter and

SoNo Switch Tower pins for sale in the Museum Gift Shop or by mail.

Cost is only \$5.00 each and members receive a 10% discount.



**REMINDER**

**The November Monthly Chapter meeting will be held  
 At 7:30 PM at the  
 United Congregational Church  
 275 Richards Ave.  
 Norwalk, CT**

**This Month's Book Review**

As reviewed by Stuart Werner

**North American Railyards**

By Michael Rhodes, MBI Publishing Co, 380 Jackson St, St. Paul, MN 55501, 2003, 240 pages, hardbound, \$34.95

Michael Rhodes, a British medical doctor, has documented 80 of the principal rail yards in the USA and Canada. Exclusively intermodal facilities are not included. It should be noted that the number of hump yards in North America has declined from 147 in 1970 to 60 by 2003.

The UP's Bailey Yard in North Platte, NE is the world's biggest, in terms of track and sheer size, and, is recognized in the Guinness Book of Records. However, in terms of cars sorted, Hamburg, Germany's Maschen Yard is the world's busiest. Also, CN's MacMillan Yard in Toronto, Ontario lays claim to the world's biggest classification bowl with 72 tracks.

The author provides an historical overview of the yards plus current traffic patterns. Maps depicting 25 of the most important yards are also included. He also offers advice on the best vantage points to view the yards. Most photos are in color.

The book is arranged by railroad (BNSF, UP, ex-Conrail, CN, CP, CSX, NS). There are also several pages devoted to yards of major switching railroads such as the Indiana Harbor Belt, Elgin, Joliet & Eastern, Belt Railway of Chicago, and Terminal Railroad Association of St. Louis.

Several historical yards such as Enola, Altoona, and DeWitt (Syracuse, NY) are also included even though they are no longer major yards.



What is wrong with this picture? The tower would be out of service with all the levers in this position. This would really never occur in service, so why is it possible today and who is responsible?

T. Cruise was sighted painting the metal shelving for the mystery project, so was he responsible?

No, Tom was in fact painting the shelving for the "G" gauge layout, before he left for his honeymoon early in the afternoon.

But our friends, Manny Rodriquez and Carlos Rodriquez, NYC Transit Signal Specialists, from the East Stroudsburg Tower Society are.

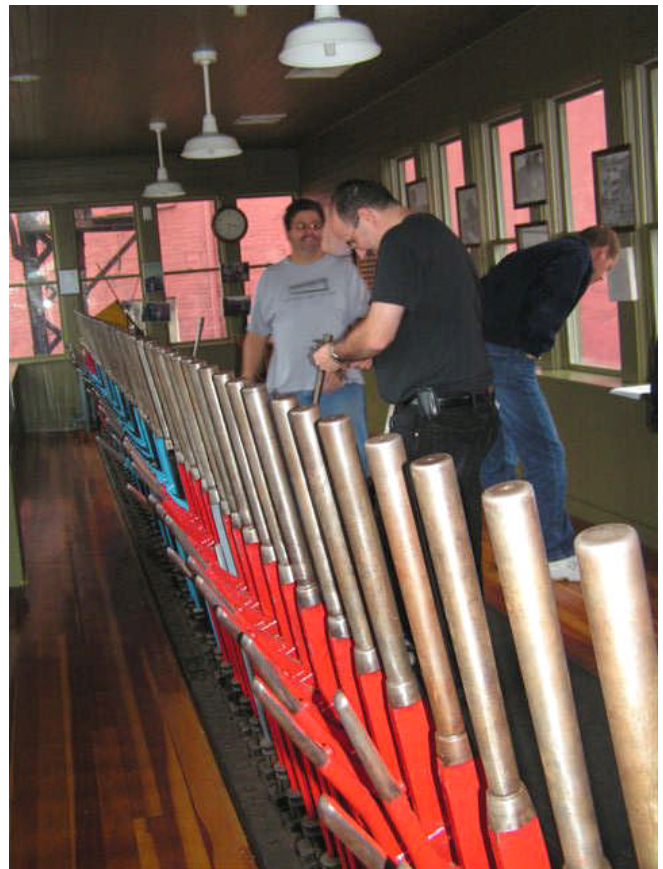
A work session at the tower, was scheduled by, John Garofalo, for Saturday November 18<sup>th</sup>, while he was out at Notre Dame, watching football.

After an early start with Roberta, Janet, Tony & Buck manning the tower, Manny and Carlos worked their magic, assisted by Manny's son Danny, who was also fully involved. They have similar "Armstrong" machines on the NYC Subway System. A full day of volunteer work to 5:00PM resulted in all but two levers being able to be moved.

The possibilities for future development at the SoNo Tower with connections to our model board are endless, thanks to the hard and dirty work performed by Manny & Carlos Rodriquez. And they are not done yet.

Uncle Buck, the Mad President

Photos by Roberta Ballard



## Signal Station 44

By Dona Menton

Check out this Gem in Norwalk's City History



Push, Pull, Lock, Push, Pull, Lock, Quick! The train is coming thru! Gotta change the tracks, all 14 levers, gotta, move them quick! Phew, ok, the train has gone by, now gotta move them back!!

Are you thinking you need a workout. The switchtower operators at this station were moving and shaking long before we used the term. See what a tower operator did all day as you check out a gem in the South Norwalk rail history.

Tucked in a corner, on South Norwalk's busiest street, sits a 3 story brick over you have probably passed hundreds of times over the years. It's been there since 1895! Don't pass it by again. Next time, take a quick walk up the 3 flights of the tower's outdoor iron staircase and be prepared to step into the past. Just 3 stories above street level, you'll step into the original Norwalk switch tower control room. The long, narrow room, full of chest high levers, flashing lights, buzzers and big windows, overlooks the 4 rail tracks heading north and south from the South Norwalk train station. The levers, almost completely filling the room and standing close to 4' high, were used through 1984 to change tracks on all trains passing through South Norwalk. For over 80 years, from 1896 thru 1984, Signal Station #44 was a vital cog in the New York, New Haven and Hartford main line rail service between New Haven and New York City. Here, tower operators directed all rail traffic through this busy section of track.



Furnished as it was in the 1950's, you can go thru a day in the life of the switch tower operator. Starting at the small desk in the corner of the room, you'll see the old phones, ledgers and note pads of the former operators. Take an opportunity to pull and push one or two of the levers to see what the operators had to do all day long!! They aren't called Armstrong Levers because it's easy! Hold your ears as the buzzers go, signaling a problem on the tracks. View pictures of how information and instructions were passed to conductors.



Amazingly, up until 1984 here, and through 1998 at many switch towers throughout the country - notes and messages for conductors on passing trains were passed off by hand via a wooden hook! Tower Operators stood alongside the tracks, arms held high, hook in hand, waiting for the conductor to reach out the engine door and grab the message. The conductor would grab the message from the attached string or better yet loop the wooden hook over his arm, later tossing it to the ground where the switch tower operator would retrieve it again. Talk with the museum volunteers about the pranks pulled and fun conductors and operators had with each other. Playing tricks, making them walk further than necessary to retrieve the hooks!

And hang on, if you are lucky, you'll begin to feel a rumble and sense the excitement in the tower. A train is coming through. Watch with anticipation and excitement as the engine rounds the turn just west of the tower. Hang out the windows and give the passing conductor a wave!

Once you have finished playing with the levers and listening to the alarms, be sure to stop at the 2nd floor on your way back down. Here you'll see the intricate interlocking machine that was built to control the levers upstairs, moving tracks back and forth and locking them in place. Amazing machinery used up through 1984.



Don't forget the gift shop on your way out where you'll find railroad memorabilia and local brochures. For Railroad aficionados, watch for local resident, Steve McEvoy's soon to be published book on the tower, scheduled for publication in 2007.

The SONO Switch Tower Museum is truly an overlooked gem in Norwalk's city history. Stop in at your next opportunity!

**The SONO Switch Tower Museum operated by  
The Western Connecticut Chapter of the National Railroad Historical  
Society [www.Westctnrhs.org](http://www.Westctnrhs.org)  
A 100% volunteer non-profit organization  
Located at  
77 Washington St,  
South Norwalk, CT 06855  
203-246-6958  
Open: Weekends 12-5 - May – October  
Admission is free, donations are appreciated.**

Photo credits: Dona Menton



HELP! Can you identify this boxcar and tell where and when it served the Army, what commodities it carried, how many were made of this type and where it is located now?



Email: [editor@westctnrhs.org](mailto:editor@westctnrhs.org)



Photos provided by Bob Briechele



6DA2 out of Darwin. Approx 12:15 (20 Oct 2006) a Truck hitched to two trailers loaded with building sand went through a stop sign approx 200m south of Elizabeth River Bridge 15km south of Berrimah, Australia. The resting crew were unharmed. The train collided at approximately 90Km/h. When the crew realized they were going to collide, they dived to the floor. luckily! Both drivers received facial/arm scratches/scrapes and bruising. Lucky to be alive at all!!!!

The truck driver apparently saw the train too late. He realized if he stopped, his cab would be hit so he decided to floor it. The loco hit the last trailer. From the time of impact to the stopping point was approximately 460m.

More from Bob Briechele  
Australian bulldogs - double enders



## Meeting of the WestConn Chapter NRHS

October 23, 2006 SoNo Switch Tower

The meeting was called to order by President Buck Neulinger at 8:00 at the Tower. There were 5 officer and 14 members present.

President's report: Buck thanked Jim Mescher for all his efforts in organizing the Chapter trip to New Hampshire and the Chapter picnic. He also stated the next meeting will be back at the Church starting at 7:30.

Vice President: Dan Foley has asked John Garofalo to put on a slide show at the DRM. The VP will ask Peter McLaughlen to put on a show for the Chapter.

Bookkeeper (Treasurer): John Garofalo reported on the Chapter finances. Quarterly statements have been distributed to the Officers. There are 82 total members between full regular and family members, local members and special members.

National Director: The next Directors meeting is in November in Alabama.

### Committee reports

Shows - The Amherst show is all paid for. The Greenwich show is Nov. 26 and we will have 3 tables.

Tower: Jim Mescher thanked all who have worked at the Tower this season. It will close Oct. 29<sup>th</sup>. Jim also especially thanked John Garofalo for being the driving force behind the Tower this year. Garf reported that the Tower is about on pace with last year. We will probably have the Tower open the first two weeks in December.

Trips/Special Events: Mescher thanked all who attended the New Hampshire trip. Everyone had a good time. There are several ideas being researched for next year's trip. Fifteen people attended the picnic yesterday on the River Line. There was \$89 left which was donated to the Chapter.

The Nominating Committee of Tony White and Beth Segelbaum reported on the election results. Forty ballots were received. The slate of officers as presented were elected. The By-Law change passed with 35 votes for and 5 against.

### 2006-7 Officers are:

President - Buck Neulinger

Vice President - Bob Westerfield

Secretary - Roberta Ballard

Bookkeeper - John Garofalo

National Director - Tony White.

### Entertainment -

November - Jim Mescher

December, January and February are open.

Old Business: Railway Masterpieces is available at some Barnes and Noble stores for \$6.95 on the bargain table. Roberta Ballard reported on the Hopewell Junction Restoration project. She visited the Depot and found it to be in very sad shape. A bike trail will eventually go right past the Depot. A book is being offered for sale to support the project. Any donations are welcome. Memberships are \$10 family, \$18 family. A motion was made and approved to make a \$500 donation to this project. The vote was 17 for, 1 against and 1 abstention.

New Business - Roy Heget has some ideas for entertainment at the Harbor Splash at the Tower in June.

News- The November Railpace has a Bob Gambling photo taken from the Tower.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:35.

Respectfully submitted,

Janet Neulinger

The next meeting is November 27, 2006 7:30 PM at the United Congregational Church at 275 Richards Ave.



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](http://www.westctnrhs.org) or [www.sonotower.org](http://www.sonotower.org) and clicking on the Shop for Charity Day banner.  
 or [www.shopforcharityday.com/4052](http://www.shopforcharityday.com/4052)

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 and our chapter benefits from your purchases.

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

- Macys
- Thompson Cigar
- Lillian Vernon
- Target
- Kalmbach Publishing
- Buy.com USA
- Sierra Trading Post
- Old Pueblo Traders
- Brookstone
- eBags
- 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](mailto:editor@westctnrhs.org) if you have any questions or concerns.

Use goodsearch.com and earn \$\$\$\$\$\$ for our Chapter.

Just go to goodsearch.com and type in NRHS in the "Who do you Goodsearch for?" box - you should see Western Connecticut Chapter - NRHS appear. Every search will help our chapter. You can add the toolbar to your browser.

**Westconn Schedule of Events**

- Sunday November 26 - Westchester Model RR Club Fall Train Meet** - Greenwich Civic Center  
 90 Harding Rd. Old Greenwich, CT Admission: \$6, Seniors \$4, Families with children under 12 \$8.
- Monday November 27 - Western Connecticut Monthly Meeting** - United Congregational Church - 7:30pm
- Saturday December 2 - SoNo Switch Tower Museum will be open for special holiday hours from 12 - 5**
- Sunday December 3 - SoNo Switch Tower Museum will be open for special holiday hours from 12 - 5**
- Saturday December 9 - SoNo Switch Tower Museum will be open for special holiday hours from 12 - 5**
- Sunday December 10 - SoNo Switch Tower Museum will be open for special holiday hours from 12 - 5**



The Western Connecticut Chapter, NRHS Inc. supports Operation Lifesaver

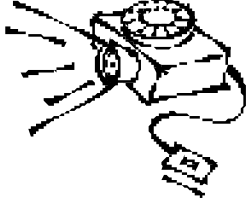
Our Next Chapter meeting will be held at **7:30 PM** on  
 Monday, **November 27, 2006** at:

**The United Congregational Church**  
**275 Richards Ave., Norwalk, CT**

Entertainment will be provided by:

**Jim Mescher**

Bob Gambling will provide refreshments



**The SoNo (Railroad) Switch Tower Museum**

We will be open on Dec. 2, 3 and Dec. 9 & 10  
 From Noon until 5PM for our Special holiday Hours

**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.