



The Liggie

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Railroad Artifact Returns To Ligonier

Bill Smith of Latrobe, the founder of the Penn-Ligonier RR Club, was an avid collector of railroad memorabilia and artifacts. He loved to buy, sell and trade anything railroad related including locomotive builder's plates. In one particular case, a builder's plate from Baldwin Locomotive Works, dated 1910, caught the attention of a young visitor to Smith's garage. The youngster liked it enough to buy it.



After treasuring it for many years, Larry Altoff of Littlestown, Pennsylvania, near Gettysburg, recently donated that same builder's plate to the LVRR Association Museum. He has forgotten what he paid Smith for it, but the builder's plate has been returned to Ligonier Valley and is now on display at the museum in the restored Darlington Station.

Engine #807

Thanks to historian, Jim Aldridge, the referenced builder's plate in the above article

belonged to Engine No. 807, a Southern Railway locomotive that was purchased by the Ligonier Valley in 1948. No. 807 had a 2-8-0 wheel arrangement and was very similar to the Ligonier engines which were purchased new between 1912 and 1916. In purchasing No. 807 and No. 594, both from Southern Railway, and an Army surplus switcher engine, No. 4025, Ligonier was able to continue business for another couple years. The railroad had been facing declining business for several years, and its once-new locomotives were worn out. These three locomotives enabled the railroad to continue operation until its demise in 1952.

Two Major Safety Advances

His name was Eli Janney, born in 1831 in Loudoun County, Virginia, to Daniel Janney and his wife, Elizabeth Avis Haines. He studied for a short time at a seminary, and then married Cornelia Hamilton. Later attaining the rank of Major in the Confederate Army of America, Janney served on the staff of General Robert E. Lee.

Although not a trained engineer, Janney had the mind of what we would today call a safety engineer. Having observed how railroad cars were "joined" together with the "Link and Pin" system, he reasoned that there must be a better and safer way to "hitch" cars together.



He was keenly aware about how harmful, and often deadly, the “Link and Pin” system could be. The “Link and Pin” system required a brakeman to stand between a locomotive tender and one or more cars to be joined together. The brakeman would lift the “link” and wait for the tender to connect with the “link” on the car and position it in a “pocket”, holding that link steady until he could drop a “pin” and make the connection. Because the brakeman was between two cars, he could easily lose a finger, a hand, or his life!

Janney began sketching what would be the knuckle coupler as we know it today. A brakeman would no longer have to stand between a tender and a car . . . the couplers would automatically connect as the knuckles came together, locking in place, and a safe coupling made. When it was time to uncouple one or more cars, the brakeman simply had to lift the coupler pin with a lever that extended to the side of each car.

In 1873, Eli Janney filed for a patent called, “Improvement in Car Couplings.” That basic design, for which he received U.S. Patent 138,405, is in use to the present day.

Janney died in Alexandria, Virginia in 1912 and was interred at Ivy Hill Cemetery.

The next time you are at the Railroad Museum in Darlington, check out the historic “Link and Pin” display near the caboose. You will see why that system was so profoundly unsafe resulting in serious injury or death to a brakeman.



Examples of a knuckle coupler and air hose are on display at the museum’s bobber caboose.

George Westinghouse, Jr., was born in 1846 and died in 1914. He was an inventor who received his first patent when just 19 years old.

When Westinghouse was 21 he saw a dreadful wreck when two trains crashed head

on into each other. That kind of collision is called by railroaders a “cornfield meet.”

The reason for that wreck was because each engineer could not stop his train in time. In those days, when an engineer needed to stop, he whistled for “Down Brakes.” Then brakemen would jump from car to car and, using a brakeman’s club, manually turn down the brakes on a horizontal wheel before jumping to the next car, and so on, down the line.

In 1869 Westinghouse, then 22 years of age, invented the railroad braking system that uses compressed air.

There must have been some skeptics when they heard about Westinghouse’ invention who declared, “He’s nuts! How the hell can you stop something as heavy as a train with air?!”

But the system worked! The invention called for an air compressor on each locomotive, a reservoir and special valve under each car, and a single pipe running the length of the train, with flexible connections between the couplers.

The engineer could apply and release all brakes on a train. Should something happen to fracture that line, all the brakes on each car would apply and the train would immediately stop.

George Westinghouse was granted a patent for his air brake on October 28, 1873. To this day the design of his invention is the same as when a patent for it was granted on that historic day.

As a Civil War veteran, George Westinghouse, along with his wife, Marguerite, was buried at Arlington National Cemetery.

***LVRRA Museum
at the restored Darlington Station
3032 Idlewild Hill Rd
PO Box 21
Ligonier, PA 15658***

***Museum Hours of Operation
Saturdays, year round, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.***

***Contact Information
724-238-7819 info@lvrra.org
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New Board Member

Debbie Nicely was born in Ligonier and is a graduate of Ligonier Valley High School, Class of 1980. She was employed with Kennametal, Inc., and moved to Raleigh, North Carolina, in the fall of that year. Following administrative jobs in the area, she moved into the accounting field, preparing financial reports for corporate tax returns while working for a tax preparation service. Accounting has always been a good fit for Debbie given her attention to detail.

In 2015, she moved back to the Ligonier Valley. While continuing to work via the internet for a North Carolina firm, she enjoys helping clients understand their financial situations.

In 2018, she began working with the financial records of the LVRR Association. She is grateful for this opportunity, because her maternal grandfather was a survivor of the 1912 train wreck near Wilpen.

Since coming home, she has enjoyed learning more about local history, and she is honored to be a member of the LVRR Association Board of Directors to help promote and preserve the Museum in Darlington.

Welcome aboard, Debbie!

The Ligonier Valley Rail Road Association Board of Directors

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The Mission of the Ligonier Valley Rail Road Association Organized in 2004

**To preserve the legacy of the LVRR
To conserve vestiges of the LVRR
To collect memorabilia of the LVRR
To educate the public about
railroading in Ligonier Valley**

Save the Dates!

The 2019 Free Museum Day
Sunday – May 5, 2019

Model Railroad Home Tour
Saturday – May 18, 2019

Fort Ligonier Days
October 11, 12, and 13, 2019

Second Annual Creepy Caboose
Saturday – October 19, 2019

Mimi M. Owens

The Ligonier Valley Rail Road Association was saddened to learn about the death of Mrs. Mimi Owens on Monday, January 7, 2019. Born on October 12, 1957, Mimi was a Job Developer at Westmoreland County Community College, where she had previously taught English as an Adjunct Professor.

Mimi was a member of St. Bruno Catholic Church in South Greensburg, and served as a Board member and volunteer with the Ligonier Valley Rail Road Association.

She is survived by her husband, Chuck Owens, three children and three grandchildren, two brothers and a sister.

We extend our sympathy and offer our prayers for Mimi’s family, friends, and colleagues.

Volunteers Needed

The LVRR Association is seeking volunteers to help maintain the gardens, serve as docents, assist with building projects, and to otherwise lend hands where needed.

Doug Kurtz, Bob McKie and Bob Burcin will gladly work with potential docents, allowing candidates to “shadow” them as they do their “docent thing” for our visitors.

If you would like to volunteer, please call the museum at 724-238-7819 or drop a note to LVRRRA Museum, 3032 Idlewild Hill, PO Box 21, Ligonier, PA 15658.

MODEL RAILROAD HOME TOUR

How do you tell the difference between a man and a boy? The usual answer is: “The price of his toys!” Although this saying applies to numerous hobbies, model railroading is also an outlet for creativity, planning, carpentry, electricity and camaraderie. The 2019 model train layout tour substantiates these claims. The self-guided tour is scheduled May 18th and features six permanent layouts and four additional modular layouts at Huber Hall. Three layouts are in Latrobe, two in Derry Township and one in Ligonier. The gauges of the layouts vary from “N” to “G.” Three of the layouts are new to the tour, and the other three are greatly improved since they were last on the tour. The photographs on this page provide a glimpse of the new layouts.

Included in this mailing is an application for the self-guided tour. As stated on the application, the number of tickets will be limited to 300. Maps and tickets will be mailed in early May to give ample time to plot your itinerary.



The major portion of this layout is “HO” gauge, but also includes an “N” gauge loop on the upper level.



This vignette features the famous Route 30 road-side giant coffee pot.



Control central for this “O” gauge layout



A farm scene is depicted in this “O” gauge layout.