

The Liggie

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BACK ON TRACK (AGAIN)

After a two-month hiatus, the interior restoration of the Darlington Station is back on track. The Uniform Construction Code (UCC) inspector shut down the project in March since the on-site drawings did not reflect the numerous changes made during the months of exterior restoration and interior demolition.

The state requires approved and up-to-date drawings to be on site so that UCC inspectors can verify their compliance with prevailing codes. Once Joe Bleehash and his company, Foothills Architecture, updated the drawings and expedited their approval through the maze of bureaucracy, work on the building resumed.

At this point, the contractor has completed the plastering of the walls and ceilings on the second floor and is currently working on the wiring and plumbing on the first floor. The woodwork is also being replicated and will soon be available for installation.

GRANT OPPORTUNITY

In response to LVRRA's request for a contribution toward the \$48,000 shortfall to complete the interior restoration, the Allegheny Foundation challenged the LVRRA to raise \$25,000, which it will match dollar for dollar upon completion of the fund drive.

In addition, on May 23 the Westmoreland County Tourism Grant awarded LVRRA \$12,000, which will count toward the matching grant. The LVRRA hopes that the remaining \$13,000 can be raised by the end of this summer through individual contributions and additional grants.

If you like what the LVRRA has accomplished to date and would like to see the Darlington Station project completed in time to be part of the Ligonier 250 celebration, please consider helping to close the gap with a donation, payable to the LVRRA and mailed to PO Box 21, Ligonier, PA 15658. Because of the challenge grant, every dollar you contribute doubles in value.

CABOOSE PROJECT

The relocation of the caboose recently donated by the Costello family of Summerhill, Pa., involved a number of obstacles. Extricating the caboose from the wooded site where it had sat for fifty years first required building a road and pulling it up over an eight-foot embankment.

Next, it was maneuvered around a corner and then carefully pulled down a hill to the truck loading area some 200 feet away. The cupola was removed to meet height restrictions on the highways. Then, with much difficulty, it was loaded onto a low-boy trailer and transported to Laughlintown, where it was stored until the site at the Darlington Station was prepared.

In February, after the caboose was finally situated on its site at the station, one last hurdle remained, the relocation of an overhead power line.



Costello caboose

Ligonier Construction and Allegheny Power combined their efforts in

April to bury the power line and eliminate the potential safety hazard of the power line falling onto and injuring someone. Brandon Leonatti, general manager of Idlewild Park, worked with the LVRRA to accomplish the task by granting permission to bury the line under a road on Idlewild property.

The LVRRA is proud to own this genuine piece of railroad history, especially since it is so similar to the caboose that ran on the LVRR rails.

BLOWOUT SALE

Effective immediately, all existing model train items are discounted 20%. Let's move out the old inventory, so we can order "new stuff."

MODEL TRAIN OUTLETS

The Ligonier Giant Eagle has joined the Ligonier Valley Chamber of Commerce and PostNet as outlets for LVRRA model trains. In all three cases, 100% of the proceeds go to the LVRRA. Kudos to Kathy Vallana and her staff at PostNet in the Latrobe 30 Shopping Plaza, to Rachel Roehrig and Linda Greene at the Ligonier Chamber of Commerce, and to Jim Faccenda and his staff at the Ligonier Giant Eagle. Our gratitude is extended to all of them for helping to expand our distribution capability.

COME ALONG WITH US . . .

More than 1600 fans have experienced a virtual ride on the LVRR since the first presentation at the Ligonier Valley Library in November 2002. At that time the library sponsored an exhibit to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the last run of the LVRR. The month-long display of LVRR photographs and memorabilia was the first in a series of rotating exhibits, focusing on different aspects of Ligonier Valley history,

As part of the month-long program, Janet Hudson, executive director of the library, asked Bill McCullough and Bob Stutzman to share their collection of LVRR photographs in a presentation at the library. When more than 200 people crowded into the library that evening, two programs were presented to accommodate the large group.

The Latrobe Women's Club was the most recent audience to enjoy a virtual tour of the Ligonier Valley Rail Road. Thirty women gathered at the Center for Student Creativity at Latrobe High School on May 7 to view the 35 minute PowerPoint presentation, which includes pictures and background on the restoration of the Darlington Station and acquisition of the Costello caboos.

The presentation is available to any interested group. All that is needed is a place to set up a laptop computer, projector and screen. The LVRR can supply the audio-visual equipment or use yours. Call 724-238-7819 to schedule your virtual tour of the Ligonier Valley Rail Road.

HOLMAN TRAIN COLLECTION

The model train collection of John Holman, Jr., which displays the names of industries serviced by the LVRR, is now on display at the mini-museum.



The display originally appeared in Homer McMaster's newsstand window in the '70s as part of the annual Ft. Ligonier Days celebration.

Holman's interest in the LVRR stemmed back to his father, a long-time conductor on the LVRR, whose retirement coincided with the last run of the LVRR on August 31, 1952.

The LVRR is indebted to Dorothy Clark, Holman's daughter, for donating the collection to be shared with Friends and fans of the LVRR. (Incidentally, McMaster was also an employee of the LVRR.)

CALENDAR OF LVRR EVENTS

June 21 - Ligonier Valley Home Tour

August 28 - Annual Dinner

September 27 - Annual Gala

November - Model-Train House Tour

BOOTH AND FLINN QUARRY TOUR

When the LVRRA schedules tours of railroad right-of-ways and abandoned industrial sites, the optimal goal is to avoid snow and leaves. April 26th, the date of the tour of the Booth and Flinn Quarry and Baker Siding, turned out to be an excellent choice in spite of our weather predictions.



Ascending the trail to the quarry

The temperature was in the 60s. (Several hikers wore short sleeve shirts; some even wore shorts.) The leaves on many of the trees were budding and the sun was shining. The threatened rain even held off until everyone was back at the station enjoying cold drinks and sandwiches.



Pausing for the camera

Thirty-one LVRRA buffs gathered at the Darlington Station and embarked on the three-hour adventure. The trek through the woods in itself was quite a treat even though much of it was uphill.

At the entrance of the abandoned quarry, guides pointed out holes in the rock face drilled by employees of Kennametal during WWII to test its carbide bits.



*Test drill holes,
A.k.a. Swiss cheese wall*

Seeing the Loyalhanna bluestone rock face rise 70 feet from the floor of the quarry to the top of the original contour left those on the tour with an indelible impression.



Cascade of water in the gorge

It is hard to imagine how human hands aided only by steam-driven drills, dynamite, sledgehammers and chisels could make such an immense scar on this rock formation in the Loyalhanna Gorge.

Although nature is reclaiming the quarry, those on the tour were still able to see remnants of buildings (possibly used to house the steam engine and the cache of dynamite) and ditches lined with cut stone. The excellent visibility of the day enabled the guides to point out even distant features, such as the mouth of the quarry on the north wall of the gorge.

At Baker Siding those on the tour viewed the "Great Wall of Ligonier" where the Booth and Flinn quarry constructed a staging area to load hopper cars with Belgian blocks, which were used to pave the streets of Pittsburgh. The wall remains in place today and is more than eight feet tall at the highest point.

Deborah Brehun of the *Ligonier Echo* and Steve Russin of the *Latrobe Bulletin* participated in the tour and provided extensive coverage in the local papers. Rich Ballash, Friend of the LVRR and venerable railroad fan, documented the tour with his camcorder. Current plans are to digitize the raw recording and offer DVDs to tour participants. Please call 724-238-7819 if interested. Long term plans include developing and marketing a 30-minute DVD of the tour.

LENDING LIBRARY

It has been almost four years since the LVRRRA acquired the Russell Lowden railroad collection. In addition to the LVRR memorabilia and railroad artifacts, including lanterns and cast-iron signs, Lowden's collection included more than 70 railroad-related books. Some of the books are noteworthy reference manuals and will remain in the LVRRRA library. However, there are many "coffee table" books focusing on various aspects of railroading, which will be available for circulation. Titles include *Age of Steam, Cinders and Smoke, Great Trains, History of Railways, Iron Horses, Steam Trains* and *Trains*.

Sally Walker is currently organizing a library system to control the distribution of these books. The books will be available in July at the mini-museum/office on St. Clair Street in Ligonier on Saturday mornings. Stop in then, look around and perhaps check out a book or two.

**THE MISSION OF THE LVRRRA
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 the history of railroading in Ligonier Valley

MODEL TRAIN UPDATE

Many people are unsure of the differences between O gage and HO gage railroad models. The traditional Lionel and MARX model trains are O gage and operate on three-rail tracks. "HO," which stands for half of "O," is smaller and runs on two-rails. The rolling stock that LVRRA has supplied to date from Weaver and MTH Electric Trains has been O gage.

Recently, the LVRRA entered the HO market with a commemorative boxcar, LVRR 1951, pictured below.



To celebrate the acquisition of the Costello caboose, the LVRRA will soon be offering an HO bobber caboose, LVRR 1950, which will approximate the original LVG57.



The HO bobber model is scheduled to arrive by late July with a price tag of approximately \$15 and will be available

through the LVRRA website and at the mini-museum on Saturday mornings, as well as at all of the local outlets: Ligonier Chamber of Commerce, PostNet in the Latrobe 30 Shopping Plaza, and Ligonier Giant Eagle at the service desk.

An aside to the O gage fans, do not fret, MTH routinely produces a bobber caboose. At some date in the future, the LVRRA will piggyback an order of O gage LGV bobber cabooses with one of MTH's production runs.

ANNUAL DINNER

Plans for the annual Friends of the LVRRA dinner have begun. Bill Potthoff and Pat Wallace are co-chairing the event to be held Thursday, August 28, at the Pike Run Country Club near Jones Mills. Cocktails will be served starting at 6 p.m. with entertainment provided by the Pittsburgh Banjo Club. The buffet-style dinner will begin at 7 p.m. and be followed by a program updating the past year's activities. The price is \$75 per couple and \$40 per individual. It promises to be a fun-filled evening highlighting the LVRRA. Invitations will be mailed early in July.

MODEL-TRAIN HOUSE TOUR

Three Friends have already agreed to host visitors and share their model train layouts. Details are still in the developmental stage, but early November is the target date for this fundraising event. The concept of the tour is receiving good reviews.

(Thanks to Gladys Light for the idea.)

RECENT CONTRIBUTIONS

*Thanks to all contributors for the following items that have been donated to the LVRRA since the last *Liggie* publication:*

Russel Lowden

Rayo generic railroad lantern; Handlan marker light; original 1901 Idlewild brochure; two original Inspection and Repair Reports for LVRR equipment; three original copies of *Story of a Mountain Railroad* by Franklin Langsdale; collection of railroad pencils, including PRR, B&O, Allegheny Valley and Penn Central; collection of railroad memorabilia, including news clippings, Conrail brochures and Norfolk Southern's 20th anniversary publication; collection of railroad books

Glenn Frye

Two Dresser marker lights

Anonymous

Scan of 1886 Ligonier Valley Rail Road pass issued to M. H. Arnot, Esq., and signed by Thomas A. Mellon.

Frank Dominick

Lionel model train rheostat and transformer

John Goodwin

Original 1945 PRR time table, including a Ligonier schedule; combination railroad wrench/alignment tool

InaMae Smithley

Original news clipping of LVRR's last run.

Ray and Fran Robb

Brass switch lock stamped P W & S

MEMORIAL CONTRIBUTION

In memory of
Donald Hontz
By
Thomas and Mary Hontz

MEMORIAL CONTRIBUTION

In memory of
Ronald Lynch
By
Susanne Lynch

2008 GALA

The LVRRA is honored that Sandy Mellon has agreed to chair its 2008 fundraising Gala. Scheduled for Saturday, September 27, 2008, at the Darlington Station, the event will include an encore performance by the Pittsburgh Banjo Club. Bill Flanagan, Pittsburgh celebrity and Chair of the Pittsburgh 250 Celebration, will be the guest speaker. Tickets will be \$250 per couple and \$150 per individual.

LVRRA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Bill McCullough - President
724-238-5859
Bill Stablein - Vice President
724-238-5570
Bill Potthoff - Secretary
724-532-5564
Bob Stutzman - Treasurer
724-537-2647
Ralph Scalise - Director
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Al Pilz - Director
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Paul Fry - Director

COMMUNITY PAY PHONE

As the LVRRA approaches the task of refurbishing the station as close as possible to its 1940s condition, any information that we can glean from the past becomes significant. For example, we know that there was a pay phone in the station. Ella Betz, granddaughter of station master Vivian Snyder, recalled that the phone was mounted on the chimney in the lobby. When workers removed the paneling, there was an outline of a phone on the plaster where Betz had indicated.

The LVRRA would like to find an antique phone similar to the one that hung in the station. It probably had coin slots at the top of the phone and an earpiece on the side. The mouthpiece was probably in the center of the phone. If anyone knows of such a phone, please contact a member of the office staff at 724-238-7819.

Some people have reported that when the phone rang, the call could have been for anyone in Darlington. The station master would relay messages or ask people to return calls. In today's busy world it is difficult to imagine that the station master had the time to track down neighbors miles away every time the phone rang.

Anyone with knowledge about the phone's use is asked to contact the office to share information or stories.

NEW FRIENDS OF THE LVRRA

Frank Dominick
Dick Flock
Mr. and Mrs. Donald Gaston
Susanne Lynch
Ruth O'Hara
Kurt Pilz
Rose Showalter
Arthur Swartz

Welcome Aboard!

HOME TOUR

The LVRRA is pleased to announce that it has been invited to be part of this year's Ligonier Valley home tour on Saturday, June 21, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The station will be one of seven stops on the tour.

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