

THE YORK MAIL



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Heritage Day 2007 Bigger and Better

by Jean Sansonetti



Visitors and crew climb aboard to investigate Locomotive 82.

the volunteers. In keeping with our 1915 interpretation time, we had guests Susan and Wade Hoffman demonstrate how to operate the foot-powered sewing machines. There were quilters on the landing of the store. And all were treated to entertaining organ playing and sound effects by Jim Curd.

The entire village

Heritage Day seems to get better and better with each passing year and 2007 was perhaps the best yet. About 50 Society members and friends came out to open the entire village for exploration and take a huge number of passengers for rides in the scenic Muddy Creek valley.

So many visitors wanted to ride that we added an extra run, which was completely full. For the first time the repair shop was open so visitors could discuss our equipment maintenance with



Susan and Wade Hoffman demonstrate how to operate foot-powered sewing machines.

Continued on page 4

Track Report

by Mike Shay

A Fall Work Camp was held the week of October 8th to 13th. Over the course of six days, the track crew constructed about 340 feet of track at the S-1 washout north of High Rock. We also completed ballasting the track at the B-2 bridge. The work camp was very successful with large crews everyday. In October the road which crosses the tracks at Muddy Creek Forks was repaved by an outside contractor. A car had recently bottomed out on the crossing, damaging its oil pan and spreading oil along the road. During November and December the track crew was busy ballasting the track at the S-1 washout. We also had to cut up a large tree that was threatening to fall on the tool house at Muddy Creek Forks. The dead tree was cut down by an outside contractor, but had to be cut up by Society volunteers.

During the rest of the winter we hope to finish ballasting the track at the S-1 washout and also to start rebuilding the track at the B-3 bridge.

I would like to thank all the volunteers who assisted at the Work camp and Dave Williamson for the use of his ballast car and air compressor car. Thanks also to the Bistline family for their donation of track tools.

THE
PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE
WILL RETURN
IN THE NEXT ISSUE
OF
THE YORK MAIL

Dues Contributions Hit New High

by Jean Sansonetti

We members of the Maryland and Pennsylvania Railroad Preservation Society have outdone ourselves this year by contributing a total of over \$15,000 in membership dues. Recognizing how much can be accomplished if we all join together, we have managed to finish the contractor portion of the TEA-21 work and to completely repaint the A.M. Grove store. We continue to provide excellent opportunities to explore and learn about the Ma & Pa railroad and its impact on the communities it served. Because of our support, the Ma & Pa right of way can be enjoyed by people of all ages: grandparents can come show their families how life was when they were young; artifacts and equipment from the railroad and village are being preserved; our buildings and grounds are being maintained and upgraded to serve our visitors better; and our interpreters are sharing new information we've discovered with our visitors.

(Reminder - we highlight the mailing label on the YORK MAIL as a reminder to those who still need to renew. Please check yours.)

It is the support of all our members which makes it possible to create, improve, and maintain one of the most fascinating historical sites in York County. We currently have 84 Flagman members supporting the effort financially.

In addition, many of our Life Members, who are not required to renew, are also sending in substantial unrestricted contributions. The M&PRPS greatly appreciates every one of your donations and is able to accomplish much more because of them. With gratitude we express our thanks to the following Annual Members for joining or renewing in the higher categories:

Narrow Gauge Mania!

by Craig Sansonetti

From the perspective of 2008, when it is almost impossible to build a new rail or mass transit line in the face of determined opposition from landowners whose rallying cry is "Not in my backyard," it is hard to comprehend the eager anticipation with which the prospect of new rail lines was greeted in the 1870s. Ongoing efforts to research the history of the Baltimore and Towson-town Narrow Gauge Railroad right-of-way map recently donated to the Society by David and Carol Hopkins (see Fall 2007 York Mail) have turned up much more than the simple facts underlying the creation of the map. A review of the 1872 issues of the Maryland Journal, a prominent weekly newspaper published in Towson-town, and an examination of railroad charters granted by the Maryland legislature, reveal that the areas of Baltimore and Harford Counties not served by existing rail lines were caught in the grip of a raging narrow gauge mania.

In 1872 alone, at least 33 articles appeared dealing with proposals and prospects for narrow gauge railroads running through Towson. The Maryland Journal was an enthusiastic booster of these schemes, vigorously espousing the benefits a railroad would bring and encouraging its readers to donate right of way and purchase stock in the railroad companies.

The following excerpts from a lengthy editorial that appeared in the issue of March 16, 1872, are typical of the views expressed repeatedly by the paper.

"In our issue of last week we called the attention of our readers to the efforts now being made to construct a railroad operated by steam between Baltimore and Towson-town. We again refer to the matter in order to impress upon our citizens the value and importance of this highly interesting subject. It cannot be denied that facilities of communication may well be regarded as the main-spring of modern progress.

"It is only necessary to look over the map of the civilized world to be convinced that the most prosperous communities are those where we find the largest number of telegraphs

and railroads. . . ."

"Time is money, and the means which will save to every one in Towson-town desirous of visiting Baltimore one half their expenses and nearly three hours a day, will not only add to the wealth of our people, but largely increase our population. . . ."

" . . . Without hesitation we commend the work to the serious consideration of our citizens, and hope that all who are able will become stockholders."

The Maryland Journal was by no means alone in its enthusiasm for a railroad. Public meetings in support of the various proposals were held in Harford County at Jarettsville, Pleasant-

Continued on page 8

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Heritage Day, cont.



Carl Seitz gave telegraphy demonstrations and introduced our visitors to the key role telegraphers played in the operation of the railroad.

photographs, slide shows, and artifacts made this a day to remember for newcomers and returning visitors alike. The children's activities were so fascinating that it took a lot of effort for some parents to get their children to explore other areas of the village. The

The mill crew, Craig Sansonetti and Charlie Nichols, along with the new display board which shows how the roller milling process works.



parking crew kept the traffic flowing into the field so our guests could find places for their cars. The station agents, conductors, and train operators handled the crowded trains safely and efficiently so that a maximum number of riders could be accommodated. All day long a steady stream of people climbed aboard to

was bustling with visitors all day. After being warmly welcomed by our greeters, most guests made their way to into the store to see the postmaster, try to guess the antiques, and buy their train tickets. Upstairs in the store the special displays, demonstrations,



Sue Barnes, Janet Smith, and Evelyn Snyder are all ready to entertain visitors on the first floor of the store.

Heritage Day, cont.

The smiles of Sarah Wisner and Jeanne Pruitt welcomed everybody who came to Heritage Day.

investigate Locomotive 82 and Caboose 2007; then, most of them made their way down to the tool house to see the track-working demonstrations. The mill and grain elevator were full of inquisitive people asking questions and being informed by our docents.

It may "take a village to raise a child," but it takes a lot of caring, dedicated volunteers to raise a vil-



Young visitors to Muddy Creek Forks enjoy the train table



lage from the obscurity of time to become once again a busy hub of activity centered on the railroad which serves it.

Many, many thanks to all who helped make our Heritage Day 2007 such a special time of sharing.

For the first time the repair shop was open for people to see, Here Jim Kuhlman (with his son Alex in the background) talks with some inquisitive visitors.

Scenes from the Fall Work Camp



The first day and a half of the Work Camp was spent in ballasting the approaches to the B-2 bridge at High Rock. Here Mike Shay, Pete Tinsley, and George Fitch are distributing ballast using Dave Williamson's ballast car, currently on loan to the Society.

By Friday the process of track laying had become routine and progress was rapid. Every member of the crew had a role to play and knew what to do. Here Sam Bistline is driving a spike while Gary Gadziala nips up the end of the tie and Larry Freeman sets the gauge. At the same time Pete Tinsley is adjusting the tie plate and preparing to set the spikes in the next tie, which Tony Vowels will lift with the claw bar at his feet.



On Saturday evening the track crew posed for a picture with the newly laid track stretching behind them. In four and a half days 14 volunteers had laid 180 ties, 360 tie plates, and 23 lengths of rail, bolted 25 rail joints with 100 bolts, and driven about 980 spikes. Shown in the picture are Sam Bistline, Larry Freeman, Ian Riden, Jim Kuhlman, and Pete Tinsley. Other volunteers who worked during the week, most for three or more days, included Lowell and Joan Sakers, Mike Shay, George Fitch, Joe Kane, Gary Gadziala, Tony Vowels, Charles High, and Craig Sansonetti.

Dues Contributions Hit New High, cont.

Engineers (\$500 or more):

Harvey and Win Bradley
William Corse
John Finlayson
Jean Goodling Sansonetti
Joseph Sansonetti
Peter Tinsley
John von Briesen, Jr.

Firemen (\$250 - \$499):

Kenneth Briers
Jeffrey Bortner
Thomas Everett, Jr.
Thomas Leach
Joseph Mueller, Jr.
Charles Plantholt
Richard Reinhardt
Ken Spencer

Brakemen (\$100 - \$249):

Larry Altoff
David Baur
Charles Boice
Andrew Burger, Jr.
Phillip Bush, II
Donald Callender, Jr.
Craig Close
Carlton Conway
Roger Dick
Chloe Eichelberger
Edward Feathers
Larry Freeman
Henry Hess
John Himmer
Donald Jones
Mike Kenyon
Stanton Leboutz
Charles Mahan, Jr.
William Mattis, Jr.
Ross Miller
Charles Nichols, Jr.
Henry Nixon

John O'Neill
John Porco
C. Stewart Rhine
Pete Riecks
Richard Schmick
John Schmidt
William Simpson
Kermit Stong
Martin Van Horn
Miles Weaver

Switchmen (\$50-\$99):

Victor Abell
Richard Anderson
J. Stephen Barnes
W. Thomas Beckett
Lana Blevins
Mark Blevins
Thomas Brown
Quick Carlson
William Carter
John Corkill, Jr.
Martin Drinan
Wayne Eissele
Harry Gesser, Jr.
Theodore Gleichmann,
Jr.
George Gross
Judy Grove
Harry Haddon
Kelly Hamm
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Leon Henise
Charles High
Gerald Hott
Robert Jackson
Barry Jennings, Sr.
Joseph Kane
James Keebler
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James Kuhlman
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Gerard Mack
Joseph Maloney, Jr.
John Manifold
Eric McKeown
Michael Miller
William Milway
Gillian Nave
Francis Packard III
Andrew Raffensperger
Rhea Reese
Ian Riden
Park Ritter
Joseph Rowbottom III
Robert Ruckart
Alicia Sansonetti
Julia Sansonetti
Tom Sargent
Richard Scholtz
Carl Seitz
K. Donald Shelton
Charles Snyder
Evelyn Snyder
Ricky Snyder
David Stephenson
Irwin Straw, Jr.
Stephen Stroup
Thomas Troike
Ray Tuleya, Jr.
H. Vernon Tyson
Richard Urciolo
J. Richard Weger
Patricia Wood

Narrow Gauge Mania, cont.

ville, Bel Air, and Rocks of Deer Creek; in Baltimore County at Smith's Hotel on York Road 5 miles north of Towson, at Long Green, and at Watkins' Tavern on Harford Road; and in Baltimore City. The announcement of the Bel Air meeting included the promise of several interesting speakers, including Stephen G. Boyd, President of the Peach Bottom Railway.

In general these public meetings were described as having a "large attendance" of "prominent citizens" who showed "much interest and enthusiasm" for the building of a railroad through their localities. At the Jarrettsville meeting on March 9, the following resolution was adopted unanimously.

"Resolved, That it is the sense of this meeting that the people of Harford and Baltimore counties have been long enough deprived of the benefits of railroad communication with the Chief Metropolis of the State, and that they will use every means in their power, and feel that it is within the means of the people to subscribe at least \$5,000 of stock per mile to insure the construction of a Narrow Gauge Railroad, as the one most adapted to their wants." [Maryland Journal, March 16, 1872]

In rural areas starved for better transportation, the low cost of building and operating a narrow gauge line held out hope that they might finally get a railroad. The December 21, 1872, issue of The Maryland Journal highlighted the advantages of adopting narrow gauge construction.

"There is among engineers a difference of opinion as to the savings in construction between a narrow-gauge and broad-gauge road, and some claim that 50 percent is saved. It is also claimed that a saving between 40 and 55 percent is made in the running expenses, and greater safety and equal speed are among the advantages admitted. Of late years the popularity of narrow-gauge railroads has greatly increased. . . ."

Ten different railroad names appear in the 1872 newspaper accounts. Several of these seem to be differing names that actually represent

the same proposal and group of promoters. Nonetheless, no fewer than six distinct lines were being actively promoted, at least five of which had actually proceeded so far as to incorporate. Reflecting on this chaotic situation, the Maryland Journal of April 13, 1872, put forth a somewhat whimsical analogy.

"It is stated that in a battle, seventy shots are fired before a soldier is killed. Now, we do hope, that in the various attempts which are being made to reach our really beautiful village by steam power, that we may get something. We are being shot at and it is hoped that we may be hit, though we ought not to expect other people to waste their powder if we don't waste a little ourselves."

Where does our right of way map fit in the reigning narrow gauge mania? A full answer to that question remains a subject for further research, but some facts have been established. Despite its title, the map was actually a product of the Baltimore and Swann Lake Passenger Railway Company (B&SL). This line was chartered by the Maryland legislature in 1868 and authorized ". . . to construct a railway, with one or two tracks, and the necessary sidelings [sic], for the transportation of travelers or freight, by horse power, steam or dummy engines, and have the exclusive use thereof, from some point at or near the northern boundary of the city of Baltimore, and passing along or near the valley of Stony Run to a point at or near Swann Lake, and to connect their said railway with the track of the Baltimore City Passenger Railway on Charles Street . . ." [Proceedings and Acts of the General Assembly of Maryland, Volume 142, Page 559, Chapter 314]

In 1868 the northern boundary of Baltimore was at Boundary Avenue, a major east-west street that became North Avenue when the city expanded to the north. Swann Lake was the Baltimore City reservoir on Jones Falls that is now known as Lake Roland. The B&SL was apparently conceived as a horse drawn street railway line to carry passengers to the expanding residential districts north of the city and recreational

Narrow Gauge Mania, cont.

traffic to the lake.

By 1872 the B&SL had done nothing to construct the railroad (and probably had not even formally organized the company), but in April of that year corporate officers were elected who had a more ambitious goal in mind – a steam powered narrow gauge railroad to Towsontown. The Maryland Journal of April 6 reported that, *“Many of the friends of the road think that it will not have its terminus at Towsontown, but that it will ultimately be continued into Dulaney’s Valley and up into Harford County.”*

The B&SL lost no time in pursuing its new goal. On April 10 a committee was appointed to meet with the Directors of the Towsontown and Swann Lake Railroad (T&SL) and the promoters of a narrow gauge line from Jarrettsville to Towson to discuss combining their efforts. The T&SL was chartered in 1858 under the name Towsontown Rail Road Company for the purpose of *“locating, making, constructing, and repairing a Rail Road from Towsontown, in Baltimore county, to a point near the Relay House, on the Northern Central Railway . . . for the purpose of conveying freight and passengers . . .”* [Proceedings and Acts of the General Assembly of Maryland, Volume 624, Page 338, Chapter 372]

Apparently the T&SL responded favorably to the committee’s overtures, as the B&SL resolved to build its line to a junction with the T&SL about 1 mile southwest of Towson.

At a subsequent B&SL meeting, held on April 7, *“The committee on right of way reported that the several owners of land through which the line will pass have granted the right of way. Messrs. Laing & Shoemaker were engaged to make a careful survey with map and profile.”* [Maryland Journal, May 11, 1872]

On June 20 the surveyors presented their report to a large and enthusiastic meeting. A lengthy account of their work, including a full description of the route and the names of all property owners along the line, was printed in the Maryland Journal of June 22.

This was the first survey of the route

that eventually became the Maryland & Pennsylvania Railroad. It extended from Boundary Avenue to the junction with the T&SL, and in every detail it matches the map donated by the Hopkins to the Society. At the same meeting the B&SL organized as a company by electing seven directors, 965 shares of the company’s stock were subscribed, and sentiment was strong to proceed immediately to construction of the road.

Can we conclude that the map donated to the Society was present at that June 20th meeting in 1872? Probably not. The Maryland Journal article makes no mention of the name Baltimore and Towsontown Narrow Gauge Rail Road that is prominently displayed as the title of our map.

Furthermore, the newspaper account gives no indication that the railway will extend south of Boundary Avenue as the map shows. At this point we can say only that our map undoubtedly dates to 1872 and represents the same Laing & Shoemaker survey reported to the B&SL in June of that year.

We have developed some theories to explain the puzzling aspects of the map and are continuing research in an attempt to confirm them. Watch future issues of the York Mail for results of this ongoing work and the story of how four of the narrow gauge projects being promoted in 1872 ultimately led to construction of the railroad so fervently desired by the people of Baltimore and Harford Counties.



!!! Wanted !!!

Volunteers For The

Annual Spring Work Camp

MAY 12-17

**Your help is needed to rebuild the 1700 feet of track
between the S-2 washout south of
Guinston Road and the Laurel passing siding.**

Call Track Superintendent Mike Shay at 717-244-0561
or e-mail him at mshay21@comcast.net
to let him know that you are planning to come.
Contacting Mike is important
so that workplans can be made and so that
volunteers can be notified of any changes in plans.

If your name's colored yellow,
Be a good gal or fellow,
Send your dues in today,
So the trains run okay.