

Leaky



Valley

Official Newsletter of the Cornell Chapter, NRHS

September, 2011

Herb Trice Returns to Talk About the Mauch Chunk Switchback — The Second Railroad in The United States

Herb Trice, noted local rail author, will present a program at our September meeting on the Mauch Chunk Switchback [Mauch Chunk is now known as Jim Thorpe], the second railway constructed in the United States.

Pennsylvania's earliest railroad, The Mauch Chunk Railroad, commenced operations on May 5, 1827, hauling anthracite a distance of 9 miles from Lehigh Coal & Navigation Company mines at Summit Hill to to their coal chutes above the Lehigh River at Mauch Chunk. The trip took loaded cars approximately one half-hour rolling downhill by gravity. Mules rode with the loaded cars and returned with the empty cars by the same route. The uphill trip required three to four hours. The novelty of the switchback railroad attracted tourist to Mauch Chunk and passengers were, subsequently, accommodated on a limited basis.

Mule power was eliminated in 1846 when a return track called the UP Track was completed. At this time the name of the railroad was changed to The Mauch Chunk, Summit Hill & Switchback Railroad. Although still a gravity system, two steam driven inclined planes were required to surmount Mount

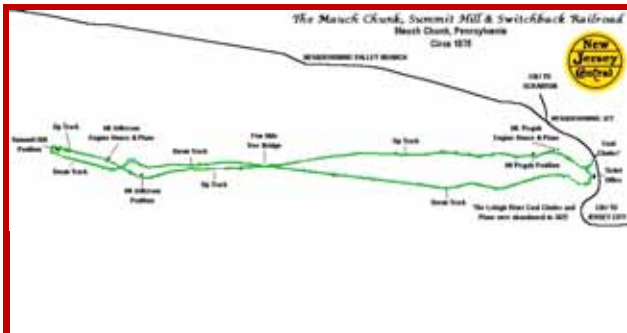
Pisgah and Mount Jefferson. The return track construction incorporated an existing switchback line that ran from Summit Hill to the LC&N Panther Creek Mines. Two Panther Creek Planes, Nos. 1 and 2, became the beginning of the gravity car track unloading system at Mauch Chunk. Prior to 1850 four chutes 600' to 700' long fed coal from the railroad



SWITCHBACK RAILROAD SHOWING RETURN TRACK AT FIVE MILE TREE, MAUCH CHUNK, PA.

down to the canal boat landing. The opening of the tunnel between Hauto and Lansford in 1872 ended the need for the gravity railroad. Up until this point all coal from Summit Hill and Panther Valley had been delivered to the Mauch Chunk canal landing and empty cars returned to the mines by the switchback railroad. Henceforth the locomotive powered Panther Creek Railroad would replace the switchback. This, however, did not end the gravity line's history

The Meeting will be held on September 13 at The History Center in downtown Ithaca. Doors will open by 7 PM and the meeting will begin promptly at 7:15 PM. This is a chance to explore a unique subject, which opened the way the the peculiar sort of construction later used to surmount South Hill in Ithaca.



CRHS Upcoming Meetings

September 13: Herb Trice presents the Mauch Chunk Switchback Railway, the story of only the second railway built in the United States for transporting coal down from a mountain in Pennsylvania.

October 4th (Note Special Meeting Date — to be held jointly with The History Center) John L. Busch talks about his book *The Steam Coffin* about the first trans-Atlantic steam ship crossing).

November 15 (Also note special meeting date on the third Tuesday of the month.) Bill Caloroso will give his presentation on the Pennsylvania Railroad Elmira Branch.

Elmira Sunday Telegram November 16, 1941
(Contributed by Dick Palmer)

Travel Thrill Days of Long Ago

Blossburg-Elmira Ride on Tioga Division Is Unforgettable Memory to Woman Writer

Mrs. Kimble G. Marvin, writer of this Sunday Telegram article, is a graduate of Elmira College. Her husband is on the faculty of Mansfield State Teachers College, health education department. The Marvins reside at 48 Sherwood St., Mansfield Perhaps some other readers have memories of the Division. Let's hear about them. - The Editor.

By Adeline Dartt Marvin

Though you have traveled continents and sailed the seven seas, you have not known the thrill of travel unless you were once a small child in a small town located on a branch railroad with the nearest shopping center 40 miles away.

Were you ever put to bed early on a fall night with the chilly, creepy feeling up your spine and the breathless sensation in your middle that told you something unusual was going to happen? You tossed from one fretful dream to another to be awakened from a final exhausted sleep in a cold lamp lit down by your mother's "Six o'clock! You must get up if you want to go to Elmira with me."

Did you want to go? You were out of bed, hair combed, face washed, best winter dress and shoes on before you could say Jack Robinson. Breakfast wasn't breakfast but a strange

ceremonial meal with cereal and eggs under the lighted chandelier that ordinarily meant the sociable dinner hour.

There was a short cold walk to the station, that in one sense was no station at all but a dingy room in the corner of Blossburg's main hotel - The Seymour House. Your entrance into the small waiting room, with its red hot stove, was greeted with the aroma of coal smoke and the bananas of long-consumed lunches. Mother purchased two tickets for Elmira, one full and one half fare and sat down on the iron armed bench, with a watchful eye on the door to see if a freight might arrive to provide conversational relief during the three hour train ride.

You needed no relief. The engine, spouting steam out on the track with its trailer of baggage car and two coaches, was glory enough. You could hardly wait for the trainman's signal to climb aboard and find the red plush seat that just suited you, where you could view the Blossburg State Hospital and the Mansfield Normal School, two buildings whose size and beauty inspired you.

Mother nodded to the half dozen passengers who straggled in but there were no intimate friends this morning. You were glad, for it meant that mother settled to her crocheting, leaving you free to press your forehead tight to the cold window pane and live vicariously in every farm house and village you passed. You were going to Elmira to shop and I repeat, though you have sailed the seven seas, you have not tasted to the full, the joys of travel, if you have not gone from Blossburg to Elmira on the Tioga Division of the Erie.

The joys of travel, with speed and the multiplicity of tourists, has vanished from many once far-off places. So, too, the trip from Blossburg to Elmira has tone to be traversed no more. I have grown up and returned from far wanderings to Tioga County. The Tioga Division still makes its daily journey but I no longer use it. When, like my mother of old, I go to Elmira to shop, I go by bus or in our own small car. I arrive in one hour against the old three of the Tioga Division. I ride more comfortably but the glory has departed. I am moved to meditate, if perhaps in this day of convenience and speed, when we started any old time and arrive anywhere, anyhow, with no goal nor purpose, have we not lost something of the romance of living?

There comes back to me the memory of the return trip from Elmira to Blossburg. Late afternoon

and I am weary. In the last hour of standing by my mother's side at counter after counter, the joys of shopping have palled. To this day, I cannot look up upon figured silk or polka dotted foulard without a sense of nausea. Mother always chose the hour before train time to visit Sheehan and Dean's silk counter with one eye peeled for a bargain. I had eaten at my favorite chocolate shop; been not an unwilling model in Flanagan's Department Store for my fall coat and hat, been allowed to purchase a new book in Miss Adams' musty shop where books were piled on the floor and tables in dusty, angular masses. I had partaken of the glories of this day of days and my cup of fulfillment was running over in a dizzy whirl of spots and figures on dark, shimmering silk.

The noisy Erie depot was a relief. The bronze Indian that stood guard before its front entrance wore the air of an old friend. I was only to glad to see the two cars of the Tioga Division drawn up on the track behind the puffing engine. We climbed aboard. The dusty, plush seats seemed infinitely soft as my small bones sank gratefully into them while our accumulation of parcels spilled over the plush. Mother reversed the seat in front. I braced my feet on the supports and opened my new book. But there was still much to excite and distract me. The other passengers climbed in as weary and bundle laden as ourselves. The Tioga Division might easily been called the Shopping Special. There was much discussion of respective values at Sullivan's and Roesnbaum's, proud showing of bargains, the usual banter with the conductor, then his loud "All Aboard."

The train puffed slowly out of the little city. Once more, I pressed my face tight to the pane that I might register firmly in my mind the lights of Elmira, for well I knew it would be many weeks before I saw them again. Not a pawn shop or boarding house on its dirty Railroad Ave. escaped me and when through a street intersection, I caught glimpses of the two parallel business avenues with the street lamps pricking the dust. I almost dislocated my neck in an effort to carry a bit of the city with me. I saw the sun set over the river in its glow of rose and silver, watched the outskirts dwindle into open country and only then did I settle back to enjoy my sensation of fatigue for enjoy it I did. It was grown up to be tired from shopping.

But even yet, one could not settle down too completely. There were experiences ahead. I knew every one of them and none of them were to be

missed. First, came the thrill of the high bridge at Jackson Summit, to hold one's breath as the train clattered slowly across to sigh with relief when you felt the last wheel pass on solid ground, the boys selling popcorn at Lawrenceville where the Erie connected with the New York Central, the weird ride to take in Tioga Junction when the train backed down; all the little towns priced mysteriously out of the dark; then suddenly like one of Hans Andersen's fairy palaces, the lighted buildings of the Mansfield State Normal School high on the hill above the puffing train. Now I was nearing home. The joy of fatigue had passed. I was just a tired little girl, fretful of the long delays but reviving to the last experience but one, the lights of the Blossburg State Hospital, gleaming awesomely at me from the hill as we rounded into Blossburg.

We were home, the last and nicest experience of all, the lights of the old Seymour House and depot, the crowd waiting for the train, father standing quietly waiting to relieve his wife and little girl of their bundles, joking them as to the number and content; the short walk home, the hired girl smiling with a late dinner piping hot on the table; the final excitement of opening bundles, trying the new piece of music, reading somewhat distractedly a few pages from the new book, parading before father in the new coat and hat, watching his quiet pleasure at the purchases mother made for him, subsiding at last into utter weariness - it's good to be in bed again.

That is the memory vivid and poignant from out of my childhood. I cannot relive it nor would I if I could. A ride on the same Tioga Division in recent years brought only discomfort and cinders. Yet there was a thrill which is absent in today's haphazard mode of travel. Will your children hold precious in their maturity, the memory of your casual Sunday journey of three times the length of the trip from Blossburg to Elmira? Are they thrilled at the sight of the family motor waiting at the curb? Do they sleep in restless dreaming over the anticipated 600 mile drive to grandmother's in Indiana? I doubt it. Will they, grown to an age of better sense, bore their contemporaries with reminiscences of filling stations, hot dogs and one dollar tourist rooms? I doubt it.

I am hearing you say, what does the woman want, stuffy local trains, isolated towns and bad roads back again? By all the heavens, No! But I do want tradition, sentiment and the magnifying of the simple things in the eyes of a child so that he may have subsequent background for dreams, moralizing or what you will. I repeat, in conclusion, though you have sailed the seven seas, if you have not known the glory of anticipation, the thrill of discomfort to achieve your journey - you have not traveled!*

*An Erie timetable dated April 27, 1924 shows one round trip daily between Elmira and Blossburg, and another

between Elmira and Arnot. There was also service to Hoytville and Morris run at this time. At Tioga Junction, trains backed to Lawrenceville, where connection was made with the New York Central. Regular passenger service ended in December, 1931 and mixed train service in 1935.

In 1941, the Erie asked permission to abandon the line, through Pine City, Webb Mills, Millerton and Jackson Summit to Tioga Junction. This was granted by the Interstate Commerce Commission. The final train left Elmira at 11:30 p.m. Aug. 9, 1942. At 4:30 p.m., Monday, Aug. 10, 1942, a 12-car freight train pulled into the Erie yard in Elmira, ending service. Seeley G. Powell was engineer and John W. Canfield was conductor on these final runs.

AUTHOR WILLIAM D. MIDDLETON DIES

William D. Middleton, 83, famed railroad author and photographer died July 10, 2011 in Livonia NY . A railroad journalist of wide-ranging interests and expertise, Middleton earned more than 80 bylines in *Trains* magazine since his first article in the October 1957 issue. He also served for many years as a contributing editor to the industry trade magazine *Railway Age*.

As a photographer, Middleton's credit line appeared with countless photos in *Trains*, and his images appeared on the cover 20 times. His work as a photographer was profiled in the Spring 2011 issue of *Classic Trains*.

Middleton wrote or co-wrote 23 railroad books, many of them standards in the field. Among the notable ones: *Time of the Trolley*, *The Interurban Era*, and *When the Steam Railroads Electrified*. He played a leading role in the creation of the *Encyclopedia of North American Railroads*, the landmark one volume reference published in 2004 by Indiana University Press.

Born in Davenport, Iowa, on March 25, 1928, Bill Middleton was a civil engineer by profession. He graduated from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in 1950. Middleton went to graduate school at the University of Wisconsin, then embarked on a distinguished 30-year U.S. Navy career. After the Navy, he continued his engineering career, capping it off with a 13-year tenure as chief facilities officer at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. He retired in 1993.

All the while, Middleton remained remarkably prodigious as an author. His many articles reflected his keen interest in electric traction, steam locomotives, international passenger trains, railroad engineering and operations. (From *Trains News Wire*, by Kevin Keefe)

From the Newsletter of the Central New York Chapter: **The Green Block**

REMEMBERING THE DELAWARE & HUDSON

*By Todd and Jack Humphrey
Part 12 – Identity Crisis*

If a railroad's personality is characterized by its locomotive fleet and paint schemes, then it can be said that the Delaware & Hudson had a lot of personality.



Former Lehigh Valley GP38-2 7323 models the blue with yellow nose scheme. The unit is fading to a pastel blue which was common. Original slide by Jack Humphrey.

Or make that, personalities, given the many faces of the carrier. D&H was not quite the Sybil of the railroad world - that title would have to go to the Rock Island - but at least in the Northeast, D&H would be the champion. The beloved Lehigh Valley Railroad was famous for its myriad paint schemes applied to



Low nose RS11 5007 is in the all-blue austerity scheme, which featured silver/gray trucks. The roman style lettering and large block numbers are fading away. Original slide by Jack Humphrey.

locomotives, but most of them were lettering and striping variations of the same basic scheme. The D&H, on the other hand, had some wildly different color combinations in many forms. In its first

decade of dieselization, the D&H fleet was the exact opposite: all locomotives wore the same basic black paint with yellow lettering. Things got colorful in



General Electric U23B 2311 displays its unique "Gray Ghost" paint scheme under appropriate twilight at the East Binghamton yard tower in 1982. Original print by Todd Humphrey.

1961 when new Alco road switchers debuted with the now classic blue and gray lightning stripe dress. This livery was applied to all D&H second generation diesel purchases up through the GP39-2 fleet of 1976. Then things got more interesting, as an



EMD GP39-2 7412 shows off its Reading heritage in its green and yellow scheme. The D&H stencils have worn off and only the numberboards belie the fact that the unit has been on the D&H for a decade. Original slide by Todd Humphrey.

expanded D&H received hand me down locomotives from Conrail. From Lehigh Valley came GP38-2 and C420 units in red, and from the Reading, more GP39-2 units, all sporting the final RDG scheme of green with yellow trim. These engines went into service wearing the colors of their former owners, though some of the C420 units were

repainted in the traditional lightning stripes. Also in 1976, to commemorate the nation's bicentennial, D&H adorned a U23B and an RS3u in a patriotic red, white, and blue scheme. In 1972 D&H had tried an experimental blue and yellow paint job on RS36 5015 that featured big "D&H" letters on the car-body sides. This one of a kind scheme never caught on, but beginning in 1977, the first of several solid blue variations were applied, first on RS11 5002, which featured silver trucks and script lettering. Another RS11, the 5007, sported a similar scheme, only with block lettering. Most of the surviving RS3 fleet was dipped in solid blue. The color was alternately called Avon blue or Altschul blue, in reference to austerity-inducing D&H president Selig Altschul. The simpler, cheaper paint jobs seemed to spell an end to the cherished blue/gray/yellow scheme. Rounding



Lehigh Valley Alco C420 409 keeps its fallen flag colors after five years on the D&H. Unlike the GP38-2s, the Centuries retained their original LV numbers. Another unusual Alco, yellow-nose RS11 5001, trails behind. Original print by Todd Humphrey.



Alco Century 420 No. 401 is at East Binghamton in 1981, wearing its original Lehigh & Hudson River colors, having escaped repainting while on the Conrail roster. Original print by Todd Humphrey.

out the Seventies, the solid blue scheme morphed into a slightly more colorful and visible blue body with solid yellow nose, which looked out of proportion on some Alco units. Finally D&H settled on a solid blue body with diagonal yellow stripes on both ends, yellow side sill, with large



Alco C424m 461 displays the blue paint scheme with yellow stripes. All of the C424m fleet arrived from GE Hornell shops painted in this scheme, the only class of "new" locomotives to be delivered as such. Original slide by Jack Humphrey.

yellow numbers. This was basically the scheme brought over by the former Reading Geeps, with blue swapped out for green. Some yellow-nose units were retouched with this final variation. One constant of all D&H paint schemes was



Above, Alco RS3u 506 was painted in this Bicentennial scheme in 1976 and was still looking good ten years later on a sunny morning at East Binghamton. The unit now works for the Tioga Central tourist railroad, amazingly retaining its patriotic colors after 35 years. Original slide by Jack Humphrey.

a large yellow shield on the sides of the locomotive's cab. By the early Eighties, only GP38-2 7322 and C420s 409 and 414 carried LV Cornell Red, earning them celebrity status. Many 7400-series GP39-2s continued to operate in RDG green. By

this time, it became apparent that the blue paint jobs on other units had been hastily applied over the locomotive's original colors, creating a strange phenomenon as the blue paint faded and washed away: the engines changed color. Former LV units faded to a powder blue (think of the Crayola color periwinkle) while RDG units turned an aqua blue. By 1986, one ex-LV Geep, No. 7324 had almost



Alco C424m #70, renumbered and repainted by Guilford, is back on the D&H in this 1990 view at East Binghamton. The Guilford G and Springfield Terminal lettering have been painted out and replaced with a D&H shield stencil. Other GTI painted units ran with intact D&H lettering. Original slide by Jack Humphrey.

reverted to its original scheme. The two red Centuries spent their entire D&H careers in faded LV paint. The last Reading painted units included 7410, 7412, 7414, and 7418. The 7400 class was sold in 1991; both the 7410 and 7412 made it onto the CSX roster in their factory applied green paint jobs. Another one of a kind oddity of the early 1980s was General Electric U23B number 2311, nicknamed the "Gray Ghost." An interesting variation on the classic D&H scheme, the entire car-body was painted light gray, with the traditional lightning stripe appearing in blue rather than yellow, with no blue paint above it. This unit was transferred to Maine Central under Guilford and became MEC 290, where it kept its unique livery, only with a matching blue pine tree logo replacing the D&H shield. Although the bicentennial U23B only lasted a couple years before getting dipped in blue, RS3u 506 soldiered on in its colorful garb for the rest of its career on the D&H. The diehard Alco now operates on the Tioga Central tourist railroad in Wellsboro, PA, still in red, white, and blue after 35 years! When Conrail disposed of the last of its oncenormous Alco fleet in 1980, the D&H picked up another unit in the form of

ex-Lehigh & Hudson River C420 2077. As a bonus to the railfan world, the Alco, which was renumbered 401, arrived still in gray and blue colors of the L&HR, adding a third fallen flag paint scheme to the D&H fleet. As fate would have it, this engine would



Alco RS11 5002, originally built for the New York Central, is seen at Bevier Street yard in Binghamton in 1980 wearing its unique solid blue scheme with script lettering. The unit survived on D&H property until 1994, one of the last Alcos to leave the roster, still wearing this scheme. Original slide by Jack Humphrey

also bear the distinction of being the first D&H unit to be repainted into Guilford's somber dark gray corporate scheme. The Guilford image spread to other units on the roster, including GP38-2, GP39-2, and C424m models. Big G added another dubious paint scheme to the D&H fleet when it acquired six big U33C locomotives from Conrail. Big Blue was now in the hands of its little competitor! One last paint scheme variation was the Guilford "paint-out" or patch jobs, units left behind when GTI pulled stakes and cut the D&H loose in 1988. The large white G insignias were painted out, and in some cases D&H shield stencils were proudly reapplied to these surviving units. In spite of the advent of the Guilford era, the D&H image came full circle in the early 1980s when shop forces starting performing repaints in a familiar scheme: the traditional blue and gray lightning stripe livery. The current version included large blue numbers, and in some cases, black trucks in place of gray. Repainted units included GP38-2 7322, the Lehigh Valley holdout, GP39- 7411 and 7414, and U23Bs 2304 and 2308. And in 1990, full circle came all over again when seven Geeps were sent to Morrison-Knudsen for rebuilding. They returned resplendent in the lightning stripe scheme, including the older style small numbers beneath the road name. Meant to be a morale booster for a struggling railroad fighting for survival and independence, these units roamed far

and wide. Unfortunately the four GP39- were sold a year later. The three GP38-2s continued to carry the flag, or more accurately, shield, well into the CP era, where blue and gray "heritage" units operate to this day, fifty years after the scheme was introduced. Although legendary railfan photographer J. J. Young was famous for his black & white photographs of the Binghamton railroad scene, color film sure came in handy when shooting the D&H in those last ten years before bankruptcy and eventual inclusion into the CP Rail system. Even into the Guilford era, locomotives in ten basic schemes could be seen running at the same time, and that's not including leased units or partnering carriers like N&W, B&M, or Maine Central. The iconic lightning stripe livery always remained the predominant scheme, in many cases with the modified large Reading-style numbers above lowered road name lettering. The next biggest groups were the yellow nose and blue with stripes schemes, which eventually managed to cover most of the secondhand EMD units and most of the smaller GEs. Railfans had fun trying to keep up with the paint roster, tracking such oddball units as U33C 758, U23B 2306, and RS3u 502, the only units of their class to wear blue with stripes. The last five high hood RS11s on the roster carried four different color schemes! For a relatively small railroad, the Delaware & Hudson certainly had a big personality, epitomized by the colorful motive power that served during the carrier's last decade of independence.

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Some organizations are still using the Postal Service for delivering known archival copies of their publications. Until we know a better way to preserve our history, we hope the USPS will continue to deliver for us.



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The Cornell Railroad Historical Society is a non-profit organization based in Ithaca, New York, chartered by the New York State Board of Regents and is affiliated with the National Railroad Historical Society, of which it is a chapter. The CRHS is open to anyone with an interest in railroads, trolleys, model railroads, transportation, the history of these functions, etc. Meetings are held on the second Tuesday of each month at the History Center, 401 East State Street, Gateway Plaza, Ithaca, NY. From NY Route 13, take Green Street (NY 79 East), three traffic lights to East State Street. After third light, turn hard right into Gateway Plaza parking behind 401 (large building with two pizza shops on ground floor). If westbound on Rt. 366 or 79, make left at foot of hill to 401 (Gateway Plaza). Doors open at 7:00 PM. Meetings start promptly at 7:15 PM. Programs range from videos to slide presentations to guest speakers, authors, model displays and more. Meetings are generally active and interactive, with members present representing all aspects of railroading, including current and retired railroaders. The meeting room contains large-scale video projection and other computer-based projection systems.

Web Site: <http://www.lehighvalleyrr.com>

www.facebook.com/CornellRailroadHistoricalSociety

FINGER LAKES SCENIC RAILWAY RESUMES PASSENGER SERVICE

The Finger Lakes Scenic Railway is offering a limited number of train excursions for the Autumn Season. They include:

- The Geneva Rotary Wine Express on Saturday, September 17th, 3-7 PM, a 4-hour, round-trip excursion from Geneva to beautiful Harris Park on the north east shore of Cayuga Lake.
 - The LVRR Fall Foliage Rides on Saturday, October 8th is a 90 minute, roundtrip, ride from the Shortsville LVRR Model Railroad Museum to Historic Clifton Springs. The Train will depart Shortsville at 9:30 am, 11:30 am, 1:00 pm, and 3:30 pm. n Victor Halloween Trains are on Saturday, October 29th.
 - The Waterloo Pumpkin Express on Sunday, October 30th is a train ride to Cayuga Harris Park.
 - Santa Trains will run from Shortsville on Saturday, November 26 (5 Trips)
 - from Victor on Sunday, November 27 (3Trips) from Geneva, Saturday, December 3 (5 Trips).
- Each 75-minute trip offers a visit with Santa onboard and carol singing.

For more info: fingerlakesscenicrailway.com

BEFORE THE DAYS OF STEEL RAILS

By Watson B. Berry

(From the earliest days of railroading until after the Civil War, rails were made of iron. This story, by Watson B. Berry, appeared in Railroad Magazine in March, 1946, and is a graphic description of "the way things used to be.")

Submitted by Richard Palmer

Sherman's March to the Sea put the finishing touches on Bill Grant's training for a career as railroad blacksmith on the old Ogdensburg & Lake Champlain. Bill spent months tearing up Confederate railroads and laying others, repairing vast quantities of "sick" iron so that supplies might roll southward following the army of the North. When he came home from the war, he found the O&LC building a blacksmith shop at Lawrence to relieve pressure on the overloaded shops at Malone, Ogdensburg and Rouse's Point. Bill then became the "village blacksmith." Engines and cars were increasing in weight and numbers during those days. Section gangs were kept busy spotting defective rails, broken spikes, fish-plates and bad connections, for the iron took a beating then. Sick rails had to be pulled out and carted to shops some 20, 40 or 77 miles from Lawrence. This

was one important reason why that town was selected for the new shop, convenience. Another advantage of Lawrence was the extensive property owned by the railroad there, including stockyards, its lumber yard with a capacity for two or three thousand cords, besides large piling grounds for the storage of such items as ties, telegraph poles and fence posts. What Bill didn't know about fixing broken, bent and worn out rails - about throwing a lot of iron together as to make it look and work like a railroad - wasn't worth knowing. He was a giant of a man, a black-whiskered, blue-eyed Irishman, with the deepest bass voice I've ever heard. As he stood by his forge wearing a large leather apron and looked into his fire, he presented a picture never forgotten by the neighboring boys who gathered at his shop. My recollections of the shop go back to the early 1880s. It was a grimy, weather-beaten, unpainted frame building about 30 by 75 feet, standing on a short siding off from the main spur at the west end of the road's property. Its earthen floor, when I knew it, had been packed hard with a fifteen years' accumulation of cinders from the forge and anvil. The place was a lodestone for the village boys and outshone the charms of the Lawrence station and yards; the stockyards with the drovers' and cattle train on Fridays; the busy congregation of farmers' wives on Mondays, when the weekly "butter train" pulled in to carry the home-made butter to market in Boston; and the big lumber yards. But Bill's shop came first because it was open every day, and his helpers were natives of our town who were always friendly to us. Two section gangs brought in their daily grist of damaged iron on man-powered "dumpies," a sort of miniature flatcar that stood about 30 inches above the rails. Other sick iron was picked up by work trains and piled outside the shop. Four men, two at each end, would lift these with pincers, and allow them to slide down on greased rails into the shop; though sometimes they would remain outdoors until needed. There was never a shortage of work. Husky young men, generally sons of nearby farmers, who had first served as section men and could recognize a bad rail, were drafted by Bill, and then taught the art of curing rails. These jobs were eagerly sought, not because they were easy but since they meant working indoors, sheltered from the bitter cold of the north country winters.

Many young fellows saved their wages for an education and became teachers, lawyers, doctors and priests, or bought farms. Others remained with the railroad as brakemen, conductors and firemen, or traveled westward as maintenance men. They were a hardy lot. The Lawrence blacksmith shop was probably the last of its kind, for with the coming of steel rails and the disappearance of wood-burners, the reason for their existence ended. But the change did not come suddenly.

It was foreshadowed right after the marriage of E.H. Harriman to the daughter of William J. Averell, an Ogdensburg banker. Averell was president of the O&LC in 1879 and made the young New York stock broker a director

of the road along with Stuyvesant Fish, two men destined to become great figures in the railroad field. Almost immediately, young Harriman proposed a reorganization of the O&LC, including provision for a bond issue to cover the cost of replacing the iron rails with steel. Yet somehow the plan was not adopted for a while.

A gradual change was effected, so that by 1885 the iron rails had passed into history. However, in 1880, the time about which I am writing, Bill Grant's shop was going strong and it was our favorite hangout. Section gangs, pretty tired after a day's work out in the open, were quite willing to let us boys help in pushing the heavily-laden dumpies into the shop. We thought it fun and the workmen encouraged us to believe this. It was something like Tom Sawyer letting his friends whitewash the fence, or like carrying water for the elephant in the circus tent. It got us onto the show, safely past Bill's "No Loafing" sign and on into the upper circles of blacksmithing.

The boss railroad blacksmith of those days cut quite a figure in his town. He punched no time clock, opened shop himself and expected all his helpers to be on time and do a full day's work. Most of us are more or less harmless snobs at times, and railroad blacksmiths were no exception. They could ride free on passenger trains - though they seldom did - and they knew all the engineers and conductors by their first names.

"Dolph" Daly, a popular engineer, would always hail Bill from his cab window as he stopped. "Hey, Bill!" he might shout. "How do you like working for Averell instead of General Sherman?"

"Averell's better pay," was Bill's answer, "but he couldn't hold a candle to Sherman."

"When I was with Sherman on his march to the sea," Bill would say, and then followed a tale of his experiences, which the boys will retell to their folks when they got home late for supper. They put in a hard day's work, but it was something no one would miss. Bill knew Averell, too, and had shaken hands with young Harriman. "There's a young fellow who knows how to keep his mouth shut," Bill once remarked. "He's no blabber. Folks find out what you're going to do when you do it. Makes me think of General Sherman."

Bill was a natural for his job. Besides his physical strength, he was distinguished in town for being a rugged individualist. He was once of those rare birds in the north country at the time, both a Civil War veteran and a Democrat. He named his two sons Sherman and Dana, for his hero general and for Charles A. Dana of the New York Sun, Bill's political Bible. Bill was proud of his work, justly considering himself several notches above horseshoeing blacksmiths. So while I grew up, Bill was the hero of Lawrence youngsters.

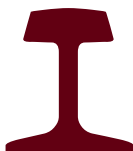
Inside the shop with the dumpy load of rails, on past the "No Loafing" sign, we stood in a boy's paradise. To be allowed to work the bellows when a fresh fire was starting

gave a fellow a chance to see the bed of smithing coal flame and glow at close range to an almost blinding heat. When the right moment arrived, Bill's hairy arm would sweep you away; then, spitting on a horny finger and thumb, he would pick up a small coal and light his pipe. This act - which Bill staged regularly - delighted the Tom Sawyers and Huck Finns of Lawrence. A few extra pulls at the bellow's lever made the fire ship-shape and Bill motioned his helpers to get busy. A bruised rail, already lifted at both ends by a chain pulley, was quickly swung round on its swivel support and the worn section lowered into the white-hot coals. At the right second, obeying Bill's silent command, the helpers raised and swung it to the great anvil, which in no way resembled a farrier's anvil. It was a large square block of metal weighing probably a ton, its face indented with grooves of varying shapes and sizes to receive hot iron in the stages of the repairing processes. There was also a shaping tool that I have never seen elsewhere. It was a heavy metal block with indentations in its surface large enough to fit over a hot rail-end placed on the anvil. When the sick rail was thus set for further treatment, a two-man team of young huskies got busy with sledge hammers.

Alternating treatments of heating, shaping, cooling and hand forging finally brought the rail back to a semblance of its former self. But it took a considerable amount of re-heating, shaping, welding and chiseling to reproduce the real thing. Innumerable spikes had to be straightened, and new connecting irons fashioned out of broken ones. There were drills, hand-operated of course, for making new bolt-holes, and repairing brake irons and other parts of freight cars.

The place left indelible memories that are pleasant to recall now. Work began to fall off about 1882 due to the laying of more durable steel rails, and Bill operated with a skeleton crew. There was still a lot of action, but also plenty of time for Bill to philosophize. When boys asked how he knew when to pull the irons from the fire, he'd puff savagely at his pipe and say: "It takes a lot of know-how, and you don't learn it in school. You had to get it, and get it quick when you were with Sherman on his March to the Sea. If you didn't have a tool you just rigged one up on the double-quick."

Bill Grant's O&LC shop went up in smoke and flames one crisp October midnight in 1883. The Baptist church bell summoned the villagers from their sleep to see the old shop passing into the limbo of the iron-rail days.



Late Flashes

Newsletter Delayed by Amtrak (Not Really)

by Gene Endres

This issue of the *Leaky Valley* was composed at the last minute due to the editor being on a trip to the west coast and Canada via Amtrak. Editor only returned, in somewhat reduced condition (an acquired cold from British Columbia) on Sunday, September 4. That, in turn, required a day of recuperation, so the newsletter was only ready for deliver by Thursday, September 8, though much of the content was pre-loaded (thanks fo the Central New York Chapter *Green Block*). *All mistakes are due to the editor's condition, physical and mental.*

Speaking just for myself, I regret that I could not include coverage on the CRHS Picnic meeting, nor a number of other items that should have been here. Look for them next month, along with more details on the upcoming October and November meetings. ALSO NOTE that both October and November meetings are NOT on the usual dates!