



# *The Railyard Local*

Volume 2 Issue 7

A Publication of the Danbury Railway Museum, Inc.

July 2004



Photo Courtesy Peter McLachlan

## **The Penn Central in Danbury**

The purpose of the Corporation shall be to operate a railway museum in Danbury, CT to educate the public as to the history of railroading and the role of the railroads as part of our local and national heritage, and to engage in any and all activities convenient to said purposes.

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Steve Gould-Secretary  
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[www.danbury.org/drm](http://www.danbury.org/drm)

**NEW MEMBERS:**

Martin F. Grossman	Wassaic, NY
Andrew R. Kaza	E. Bridgewater, MA
Michael C. Cavakiere	Brewster, NY
Solomon Jacob Jaskiel	Brooklyn, NY
Robert S. Pitcher	Brookfield, CT

**IN REMEMBRANCE: L. Peter Cornwall**

As President of the DRM, I must sadly tell you of the passing of L. Peter Cornwall on May 2, 2004, at the age of 87.

Peter, our first President and one of the founders of the Museum, had a vision back in the early 1990's for a successful railroad museum in Danbury, CT. He and other people worked hard for this vision to succeed and today the DRM remains one of his legacies. He was also an accomplished railroad photographer, historian and author.

Peter lived for railroading and actually lived through its golden age, capturing its essence in his photographs and writings. He will be sorely missed by the Museum's membership and by all those he touched with his knowledge.

On behalf of our Museum's membership, I would like to offer the family of L. Peter Cornwall our sincere condolences and a large thank you for his insight and love of the Museum

Ira B. Pollack

**Volunteers Needed:**

With our new schedule of Saturday & Sunday trains, our weekends are becoming very busy. We are looking for car hosts and tour guides who can give us some time. Two hours or two days, whatever you can spare.

Please contact Dave Lowry on Saturdays and Sue Thomas on Sundays.

Dear Readers:

In this issue I would like to thank Ira Pollack, Stan Madyda, Patty Osmer, Steve Gould, Chris Locke, Frank Sullivan, Sue Thomas, Suze Blackman, Peter McLachlan and Skip Kern.



Newsletter Message to Members

From Ira Pollack, President

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Dear Members,

Hope all is well with you this summer season. I would like to fill you in on some of the things that have been happening at the Museum in the last month or so.

We've been busy in the yard with a training program for new engineers, conductors, and brakemen for our weekend rail yard excursions. We've been trying to keep operations moving on a full-weekend basis by bringing some new people into the training program. Of course, we always need more help and more trainees to fulfill some of our new goals.

I'm always talking about our volunteers who make or break this operation so once again your Museum needs you to volunteer. We need your help at the front desk, as tour guides on Saturdays, and as car hosts on the weekends. We need you in all parts and aspects of the Museum.

In the yard, we've been working on the Wilton semaphore, trying to finish off some detail work and finally erecting it next to Track 18. The main goal is to make this an operating display for the education of our guests. We have also begun putting up signs in the yard explaining what a particular piece is and giving a capsule history of it. More signs will follow. We also have plans to rearrange some of our equipment. We plan to make a more accessible area at the 34 platform for our guests and also to include some different displays on the platform itself.

There are always more projects to do at the Museum than there are people to do them. I can only do so much with limited budgets and peoplepower. If you can spare any free time on a weekend, please help us grow. Please come out to help.

In closing, we have also been working on a strategic business plan that will bring into focus our goals and objectives. This will allow us to know where we hope to be in 1-5-10 year increments and how we can achieve these goals. I'm very excited by our involvement in this project. In essence, in certain cases we will be reinventing our Museum and we will also have a real plan to follow for our future development.

Please support your Museum.

Ira



In 2003, the Library received a notable negative collections, those of the late photographer and author, Don Ball, Jr. This collection contains 633 negatives of the New Haven Railroad. The Ball Family had Mr. Ball's close friend, Walter Grosselfinger, arrange for disbursement of the collection. Our thanks to Ron Freitag who initiated contact with Mr. Grosselfinger to bring this collection to the DRM.

#### More Recent Acquisitions:

- Fred McKenna donated 15 railroad drawings done by member Vic Westman.
- William Kiesel gave us two foldout brochures on the New Haven's "Comet."
- From Bob Boothe, we received 2 blue prints for an Alco 2-6-0.
- Arthur Rickerby is a frequent donor to the Library. Recently he gave us a collection of corporate brochures, magazines, news articles, photos, books, calendars and postcards.
- Arthur T. Smith donated a Pullman floor stand ash tray.
- Model railroad magazines were received from Alma DeLuca.
- An anonymous donor gave us magazines, various bulletins and calendars
- Howard Peatfield donated Greenburg Price Guides
- A collection of bound volumes of "Trains Magazine" was received from the Estate of Frank Knotts c/o Peter McLachlan.
- Bob Andrews donated a May 1911 issue of "American Engineer Journal."
- Jim Towey is another frequent donor and he gave us two photos of Sperry Rail Cars.
- A 12 piece collection of New Haven dining car silverware was donated by James H. Stevenson
- Ellen Klaus donated a collection of 60 slides.
- Cecil S. Ashdown gave us a Pennsylvania Railroad map circa 1920

#### DRM Newsletter – July 1994

The newsletter announced that we had a temporary headquarters at 16 Ives Street through the generosity of the DaSilva brothers. A schedule of meetings was announced for July and August for Wednesday nights and mention was made about an on going program of slide and video shows.

There was a call for volunteers to man the newly opened gift shop, to be car hosts and work on the trip committee and to help with accessions and operations.

Members were also asked to be on the lookout for any artifact, from a poster to a parlor car that may be available for acquisition.

The newsletter also announced that all retired railroad employees were eligible for yearly dues at \$15.00. The membership by this time had grown to 88 people.

The newsletter also mentioned stamps that were issued by the Post Office, a fan trip to the Harmon Shops sponsored by the West Conn Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society, passenger cars from Sweden that were delivered to the Belfast and Moosehead Lake Railroad and a clarification about an article that appeared in the News Times about the DRM.

If you are interested in reading more about the DRM's history, a close to complete set of newsletters is kept in the Library. We are missing some issues and I'll mention them in next month's column.

Last issues "what is it" is the last known New Haven RR shop built blacksmiths forge. Please stop by to take a look. We will soon have a new blacksmith shop to house the forge.

Some photos from our Train Show on May 1st and 2nd.





## SPERRY RAIL DETECTOR CAR # 135

By Steve Gould

I was going through some photos the other day and came across these two of a Sperry Rail Detector Car. On closer examination, I found that it is none other than our recent acquisition, #135!! The car is shown at Manassas, VA and I took these pictures from a coach vestibule on the "Piedmont Limited", a special excursion sponsored by the Washington, DC Chapter of NRHS with steam engine ex-N&W 4-8-4 #611 powering the train between Alexandria, VA and Charlottesville, VA on June 2, 1985. This was on the return trip to Alexandria.

I also found a photo of #1455 when it was on display at the Edaville Railroad in South Carver, MA. This was taken by my parents when they visited the Edaville sometime in the mid to late 1950's.

## GIFT SHOP NEWS.....



Peter Lynch, author of the popular New Haven Railroad, has another book out called Penn Central Railroad: The Pioneer Merger Road 1968-1976 which includes photos from our own Museum Secretary, Steve Gould, as well as from Jack Swanberg and others. We are hoping to have Peter at the Museum this summer for a book-signing.

The Gift Shop is seriously in need of a volunteer or two to help us out this summer, especially on weekends. If you like people and enjoy selling, this is a great place to volunteer. Please contact Patty Osmer at the Museum (203-778-8337), or e-mail her at [posmer@core.com](mailto:posmer@core.com).

## FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN

Since the last Newsletter, we have received donations for the restoration of the NYC&HR caboose from:

John Fegley  
Anthony Muffati  
Christopher Kearney

And donations to our Fundraising Campaign from:

Darrell Mell  
Andrew Neilly  
Caroline Stokes  
Richard Stepanov

As of mid-May, we have received donations of \$11,453 toward our goal of \$30,000.

Remember that all donations are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. Don't forget matching grants if your company offers Such a program!

**SPECIAL!** For the month of June, all members will receive an additional 10% off any Pennsy or NYC book!

Few words can evoke emotions from a rail fan greater than "Sperry Carl!" (Ok, "steam engine" comes close.) To see one rambling down the tracks is always regarded as a treat, as you never know where or when they're going to show up, even if you're expecting one. My exposure to every car in Sperry's fleet has allowed me to gain knowledge about not only the operation of Sperry, but its history as well. I would like to share the history of the SRS 135 with the readers now.

SRS 135 began as two 3"x10" pieces of channel iron on the erecting floor of the St. Louis Car Company in St. Louis, Missouri. Electro-Motive Corporation, a subsidiary of General Motors in LaGrange, Illinois, teamed with St. Louis to build gas-electric rail motorcars, or "doodle-bugs," as they were affectionately known. Gas-electric motor cars were used all over the country, as it became too expensive to operate a full blown train on seldom traveled branch lines. The railroads used these cars to ease the burden of continuing to offer passenger service where otherwise it wouldn't be economically feasible.

In 1928, St. Louis Car Company number 1459262 rolled off the floor, and was shortly thereafter delivered to the Seaboard Air Line Railroad, as their road number 2023; an eight window, 34 passenger combination baggage doodle bug. It was powered by a Winton 120 gasoline engine, rated at 275 horsepower, coupled to a General Electric generator. It was originally 74 feet long, 13 feet wide, 10 feet 4 inches tall, and weighed 53 tons.

The SAL operated only two branch lines with gas motor cars, the 337 mile Savannah, Georgia to Montgomery, Alabama line, and the 263 mile Hamlet, North Carolina to Savannah, Georgia line. The SAL timetable 36 shows these two branches as operated by a "Gas-Electric Motor Train."

Sperry acquired SAL 2023 July 6, 1945, and it was delivered to Sperry's shops in Brooklyn, Illinois to be gutted, stripped down, and rebuilt as a Sperry Rail Service detector car. When Sperry's Brooklyn shops were finished with the detector car, it was now 60 feet 2 inches long, 13 feet high, 10 feet 4 inches wide, and weighed in at a whopping 153,300 pounds (over 76 tons!)

Dr. Elmer Sperry's idea was to operate a company which owned all the equipment, and lease it out to the various railroads.

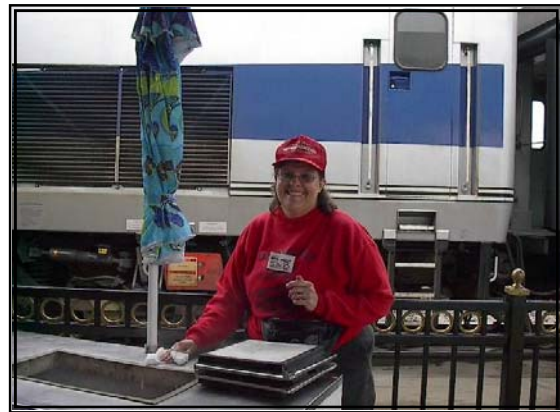
This way, he (later followed by Harcourt Drake, his chief engineer) could keep each car operating at the latest level of enhancements and improvements, to offer the best possible service to the railroads, similar to how the company continues to operate today.

The first major overhaul of the car provided a new prime mover, a Roiline F1850. This was replaced by a Caterpillar 1693, and then with the style of the current engine, a Caterpillar 3406, in January 1987.

Future articles will cover the layout of the car and its operation.

Christopher Locke, an electrical engineer for SNET, worked for Sperry Rail Service as Assistant Operator, Operator, Welders Helper, Electronic Repair Technician, Field Engineer and finally as Maintenance Manager, a position he held until he left the company in 1996.

## MEMBER PROFILE



Suze Blackman grew up in Wilton, CT in a house built in 1706. She has been with the Museum since it's opening served many terms on the Board of Directors, been a part of the Marketing Committee and updated the Material Safety Data Sheets manuals. Besides being "The Ice Cream Lady", Suze has worked every show and many birthday parties. She's been a witch, Mrs. Clause, Easter Bunny helper. She's helped with the restoration of the RDC #32, painted rolling stock, given yard tours and has helped out with every facet of the operation of the Museum.

Suze's vacations revolve around trains with her husband and two boys (when they were younger). She started her honeymoon on an Amtrak to San Francisco and Portland. She (with her husband Ed) has since been railfanning at East Broad Top, Strasburg, Reading and Blue Mountain and many other places.



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## MUSEUM CALENDAR

August 15th                                      Member Picnic  
Every Saturday & Sunday                  Railyard Local Rides

Wednesday Night Schedule of Events: Starts 7:45 p.m.

July 7	Steve Mayerson	Weathering Box Cars
July 14	J. W. Swanberg	US Steam in the Ecuadorian Mtns.
July 21	Ed Blackman	Beautiful Railroad Scenes
July 24	Erie Lackawanna Passenger Car Preservation Society Saturday Seminar Program 2:00 to 4:00 p.m.	

Museum Hours: Tuesday thru Saturday 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.  
Sunday Noon to 5:00 p.m.