

# The Railyard Local

Volume 4, Issue 6

-The Monthly Newsletter of the Danbury Railway Museum-

June 2005

## Main Street Crossing Shanty

By Stan Madyda

Every so often the Reference and Research Library receives requests from individuals seeking information about family members who worked on the New Haven or other area records. Unfortunately, we have very little history regarding employment records.

One such request was received in February of this year from Sheila Stahley McIntyre who was seeking information on her grandfather, William A. Stahley. Mr. Stahley hired out on the New Haven prior to 1930 first working as a brakeman and in later years as the crossing gate attendant on Main Street in Danbury. In her email, she mentioned that she had photos of her grandfather at the shanty. I asked if she could share them for inclusion in the newsletter. In addition to the photos, her sisters wrote their remembrances of their grandfather and the crossing shanty on Main Street.

*I remember we used to be dropped off there*



William A. Stahley at the Main Street crossing shanty

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## Rail Flaw Detection Car Days

On June 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> Danbury Railway Museum will present its first Rail Flaw Detection Car Days. We will be giving rides on board the Sperry 135 and possibly on our Union Pacific rail flaw detection truck. These pieces of equipment were formerly used for rail flaw detection, finding cracks and fissures within the rail, and traveled countrywide. Please join us for a different kind of train ride through our railyard.

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DRM Express Track and Membership Updates

## So, You Want to Learn How to Test Rail!

By Chris Locke

**Next installment in the continuing series on the SRS 135 (Sperry) rail flaw detection car**



Well, you've been driving for quite a while now it seems, you've been a "stooge" for almost 6 months. Your probation is over, you've received your drivers certificate card, and you're very proud of the Level II on the front. You are permitted to run light without supervision from the chief! You've been reading your operators manual, and the chief has started giving you some of the Assistant Operators exams, little tests, maybe once a week, with a dozen or two questions that test your knowledge of all you've done, and all you've read. You've gotten some pretty good grades on them too. You've got the evening routines down to a tee, you're conscientious enough to know what needs to be done the night before so the chief doesn't jump all over you about forgetting to change the brushes last night in tie-up and now we're holding the main and we've got to do maintenance when we should be testing! You can change a flat RSU (Roller Search Unit, the ultrasonic testing devices that ride on the surface of the rail with a plastic wheel inflated with a liquid that smells

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## New Members

We are delighted to welcome our new members this month. All members are welcome to attend the weekly meetings held Wednesdays, 7:45pm, at the Museum, 120 White Street, Danbury. We invite all members to become involved in Museum activities as soon as possible!

Jen & Mike Cicra	New Fairfield, CT
James F. Donohue	Katonah, NY
Gary Pyle	Danbury, CT
Gary R. Lehring, Jr	Carmel, NY
Audrey Insift	Pound Ridge, NY
Colleen Cyr	Danbury, CT
Robert & Elizabeth Foster	Newtown, CT
Elena Dunn	South Salem, NY
John P. Simms	New Fairfield, CT
Lynn & Michael Roberts	Sandy Hook, CT
Marilyn Brownjohn	Bethel, CT
Marianne Paladino	Danbury, CT
William R. Brett	Danbury, CT
Farouk Abi-Karam	Wilton, CT
Kristen Gunn	New Fairfield, CT
Bill Holand	Bethel, CT
Heidi Gonzalez	Danbury, CT
Mary & David Nordmann	Bethel, CT
Ann Godzwon	Ridgefield, CT
Jose M. Vas	Danbury, CT
Eleni Caffrey	Bethel, CT
Catherine Littleton	Danbury, CT
David Teagarden	Bethel, CT
Anand Tirumani	Monroe, CT
Joseph Sinnott	Mahopac, NY
Paul & Jeanne Brunet	Brookfield, CT
Donald D. Gauger	Monroe, CT
James Burggraf	Fairfield, CT

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## DRM Receives Generous Gift

On behalf of our members I'd like to sincerely thank Mr. and Mrs. Rodney Swain for their most generous gift to the Museum. This gift of \$10,000 presented by the Fidelity Investments Charitable Gift Fund, will be used for the continued restoration of the RDC #32. Budd car. It will enable us to replace the worn wheelsets and bearings on the car. This restoration has been very active and successful for the Museum, but it requires an ongoing effort. We greatly appreciate the support the

Museum has received from the Swain family in

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the past, and now this recent generous gift.

## Ten Years Ago

By Stan Madyda

The June 1995 DRM newsletter was the first to feature a new logo. The logo was vertically oriented and showed a 4-4-0 steam engine. On the bottom of the logo was a banner, "Along The Maybrook Line."

The newsletter started with the news that on May 23, 1995 the lease was signed for the yard. The lease runs to August 31, 2014 and is renewable beyond that date. It was reported that more than half the perimeter had been fenced in. Officials from CDOT were on hand to discuss the remaining fencing that needed to be installed.

Trackwork needed be done within the yard to accommodate the fenceline. Peter McLachlan had a special insert in the newsletter asking for help. Saturday, July 1st was the day chosen for DRM members to work on moving the main yard lead laterally to meet another track. The plan was to get as many people as possible to work along with a backhoe.

Also in June, the DRM received our Budd cars, #47 and #19 which was later restored as #32. The cars were pulled by FL-9 #2022 along the Maybrook to our yard. The cars would need extensive restoration work, the newsletter noted. Both cars were a gift from Metro-North Railroad. There was also a photo by Peter McLachlan of #47 pulling into Belspring Siding just south of Cornwall Bridge Station to allow northbound NX-13 to pass. The Budd Car was operating as Train 431 an all stops run from Pittsfield to Danbury.

A brief history of the Danbury & Golden's Bridge Street Railway, formed in 1897, was presented. The line was to connect at Backus Corners and run southwest to Golden's Bridge. The idea for a line from Danbury to a connection on the Harlem Line actually began in the early 1890's but did not come to fruition. The Danbury & Golden's Bridge company was later incorporated as the Danbury and Harlem Traction Company with the goals of diverting freight and passengers away from the New Haven. The newsletter states that rails and track were laid but the history stops there with a promise that more details will be available from the DRM Library. Unfortunately, we never received anything from Peter Cornwall on the subject.

Finishing up the newsletter was an announcement about dues coming due, a new trip in September to the Hudson River with stops at Cold Spring and tours of West Point, and a very brief accounting of 2-10-2's and 2-10-4's being used by railroads in New England.

# DRM Express Track

By Ira Pollack, President

I hope all is well with you. This month I would like to share with you the state of our Museum, where we're heading, some of our problems, how we may solve them, and how we may continue to grow as a museum and organization.



About two years ago the Museum, although growing quickly, was operating at a loss. The monies that had been made in the past were almost depleted with no new sources of income. Throughout this growth period we had spent more monies on the many new projects than

was coming through the door. Our organization could not continue to function in this way.

To remedy this I felt an emergency marketing plan must be devised to reverse this financial trend. A plan was formed to enhance and expand our operating schedule, running trains every weekend both Saturday and Sunday, with the possibility of operations on Thursdays. Remember, visitors coming to the Museum want to ride a train, so this added schedule should certainly attract them. A training program was also established to certify and qualify the newly added crews for these extended operations, initially with much success. Also, we established an aggressive advertising and marketing campaign, with a family-oriented focus. Our Advertising Director targeted schools, bus trips and tour groups within an expanded geographic area. This increased marketing and the expansion of our operations has been an incredible success for the Museum. As a result the Museum ended 2004 with a profit. I must commend all of the hard work and commitment that was needed to accomplish this.

We also have added, and will continue to add new events to our yearly schedule. The goal is to appeal to and attract a wider variety of guests. The Santa Claus, Easter Bunny, and new Pumpkin Patch trains events have proven to be increasingly successful. Hopefully the new events of the Hammer-In and Jeep Meet will do the same in the near future.

Although these new programs and events have been very popular with our guests, and immensely helped the Museum financially, they have required a great deal from our volunteers. We are operating with a limited staff with many of us doing multiple jobs. We still need more volunteers in all of our various departments. These range from being a part of the train crew to tour guides to front desk personnel. There are gaps that desperately need to be filled to continue our growth and operations. We have also reached the point of almost not being able to operate our full schedule of train rides on weekends because of lack of crew. With any organization, there is always some attrition in the volunteer roster. In a growing organization such as ours, it is even more important to have new volunteers join in our effort.

As you well know by now, I am and always will be a strong believer and supporter of our volunteers. It is the volunteer who has made this organization what it is today, and will keep it going and growing. I need your help. The Museum needs your help. If even one-fourth of our 600 members could come forward and become involved it would make all the difference.



We are in the process of forming a procedural manual to teach and guide the volunteers in the operation of each particular department, such as, how to run the Gift Shop or how to run the front desk, etc. This will ease the training process for the new volunteers. I also propose having a New Member Day on which personnel from each of our different departments will be on site to explain the volunteer opportunities and recruit new volunteers in the new members' areas of interest.

I'm very serious about what I've said here. The Museum needs your help now more than ever before. We have worked very hard over these last few years to grow and become financially viable. Now with the Museum's increased popularity and expanded schedule we need your support and help. Please help our Museum continue to grow.

AWFUL) in minutes flat, and have even done it while the operator was driving because the car was testing in some horribly slivered up rail, and you were getting flats almost faster than you could change them.

So, today, you're driving along, the usual 10 miles per hour, and the phone rings. You pick it up expecting the chief to tell you to take your break, and the operator will relieve you, when he says to your surprise "The operator is coming up to relieve you. Bring me a fresh cup of coffee, and come sit on the tape for a while." The tape. The tape, you think. The green strip of paper that seems to roll on endlessly, with little ink squiggles all over it. They mean something, you've learned that in your manual and your quizzes. Wow, you're going to sit on the tape today!

You hurry through your cup of hot chocolate, and take a last glance over your operator's manual. So many things you had to memorize! Which indications mean what, what mandatory stops to make, what stamps to use, which switches do what, man you're nervous. And the railroad is back there too, watching the chief do his job. You've not been in the testing compartment yet while the car was working before. You're a pretty tough guy, but the thought of this still gives you butterflies.



You grab a cup of coffee for the chief, walk through the bunkroom, through the rear engine room, that darn engine is SO loud, and open the door to the testing compartment. As you close the engine-

room door, you hear noises you haven't heard before. Sure, you've heard the fan from the power supply of the "green box" (the green cabinet that houses the electronics that test the rail) but the lights are blinking all over, and the green tape is moving, both of them, so fast it seems. The chief has you sit down next to the Dy tape and watch for a while. He explains the Dy is

3 pens, that seem to whip around at an amazing speed, that provide raw information right



out of the search units, unfiltered, and provides some detail as to what's going on with the tape in front of him. And that's another story, the main tape, the one he's constantly staring at, there are 12 pens there, some seem to move both directions, sometimes fat bumps, sometimes skinny bumps. You've learned the purpose of each of those bumps and a little about what they mean. The tape rolls toward you, the rail you've tested rolls under you, and away from you, and you

watch the chief, always scanning, main tape, dy tape, out the window, main tape, dy tape, out the window, except this time...

The next series of actions happen so quickly, it seems the chief can't possibly have time to think about them, instinct takes over, and he knows exactly where to reach without even looking. Check mark, beep, up brushes, beep-beep-beep, up pen unit, stamp, beep, slash-slash. What the heck just happened?

You stare in amazement as you try to comprehend what he did, and the speed that he did it. The chief put a check mark next to something on the tape, something he wants to go look at. As a driver, you remember the familiar "beep": stop the car. Then, as you've seen happen hundreds of times before, the two brush carriage lights on your drivers panel went out, in response to the chief lifting up both the right and left brush carriage switches. Then you remember what comes next, three beeps to back up, to go to the spot the chief wants to look at. He lifted up the pen unit so the ink wouldn't wick into the tape, put his "Examining Operator" stamp on the check mark, to indicate to the quality department that *he* was the one to make the hand test, made two large pencil slashes on the tape, to mark the last rail fully tested before slowing down, and one final beep to stop the car near the right spot.



# Update on the HO Layout

By Jeff Van Wagenen

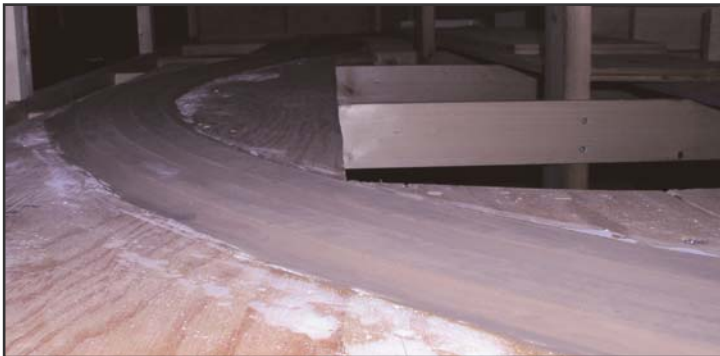
On April 28, 1869, Charles Crocker's Central Pacific tracklaying crew laid ten miles and 56 feet of track in one 12-hour day, setting a record that still stands. Here at our Museum, our three man-crew of Wade Roese, Marty Grossman and Jeff Van Wagenen laid a mile of track in just two evenings. Of course, we had the advantage of using flex track, as well as an 1/87 scale ratio. We still couldn't catch them!



Jeff Van Wagenen nails as Marty Grossman glues to secure the roadbed on the HO layout.

First order of business was to prepare the roadbed. We used 'Homa-Bed' from the California Roadbed Company, which generously offered a

discount to the DRM. We used carpenter's glue and 19 gauge 1/2" nails to secure the roadbed to the plywood sub-base. We then used wallboard compound to fill the saw kerfs and the area between our double tracks. The wallboard compound shrinks as it dries, making a natural hollow between the double tracks. After all



Double tracks of roadbed covered over with wallboard compound.

was dry, we lightly sanded the roadbed to remove any excess wallboard compound, and then painted the roadbed with a oil-based paint salvaged from the DRM supply closet, in order to seal it.



Look for the continuing Update on the HO Layout in the July issue.

# 1890 Steam Locomotive

The DRM welcomes the exquisite model of an 1890 steam locomotive with accompanying coal tender created by John O. Freeborn in its specially built display case. The Museum is very privileged to have it on loan for two years.

This model is of the Milwaukee Road Class H5 4-4-0 locomotive #315 built in 1890 by the CM&StP at West Milwaukee Shops, and featured in the November 1970 *Model Railroader*. A framed copy of this is part of the display, giving additional information on the locomotive that was the inspiration for this model.

The following information about this actual model is framed on display and reads as follows:

"This model of a 1/12 scale 1890 steam locomotive is made with 23 different kinds of exotic woods with brass accents for parts such as boiler rivets, banding and chains where wood would have been impractical.



All working parts are movable. The running gears are operational. This model required about 1,000 hours of machining, fitting and gluing. Another 1,000 hours was spent on drawings and jig and fixture making.

The glass pine display case with moulding and turned finials are set on a trestle type stand with turned spindles.

John O. Freeborn, a long time New Fairfield resident and avid woodworker, had a love of trains since his boyhood in the 20's and 30's in the Midwest. John felt this model was on of his greatest accomplishments. His background in machining and engineering, as well as his distaste for wasting exotic scrap woods, made this a labor of love. This was a project completed with great attention to detail.

With great pride, we share this steam locomotive with the Danbury Railway Museum."

We in turn with great pride share this exhibit with our members and guests at the DRM.

*Main Street Crossing Shanty, Continued from Page 1*  
 while Mom shopped in Danbury and Grandpa made us feel at home in his little hut. There was a wood stove in there and possibly a little bed and chairs. Nothing fancy at all. When Grandpa got a call, he would go outside with a hand held stop sign and stop traffic both ways in Danbury while the train went by. Didn't we pick up coal on the tracks for the stove? I know we picked flowers along the track too. - Cindy



I remember Grandpa giving me and Cindy a coal bucket to walk along the tracks to pick up the coal spilled as the train went by. He would use it in the pot belly stove to keep us and him warm. It was always cozy in there and we would sit on some sort of bed-like a wood box covered with a pad I think. There was a funny phone in there that would ring from the previous crossing area to say that the train was coming and to go put the arm down. The shanty, as he called it would shake when the train went by and while we were somewhat scared it was very exciting. After it passed we would run out to see the caboose and usually a man waving a flag go by - Susan

*I remember Mom dropping us off while she went grocery shopping "downtown". We would all cram into the little shed and when the train was coming (after Grandpa got the call on the hotline) we would go outside and he*



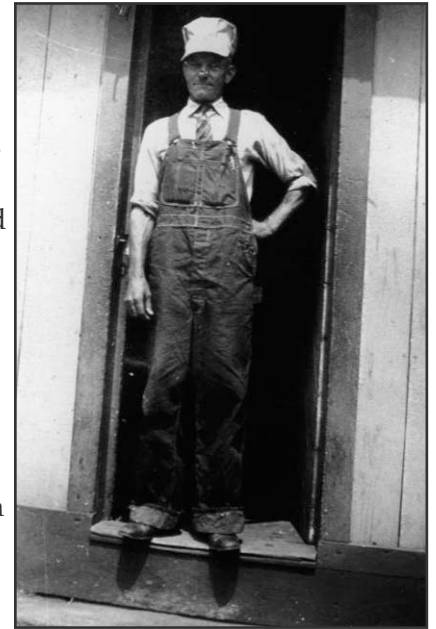
A painting of the crossing shanty at Main Street.

*would make us stand far enough away so we would not get hit. He would go on the opposite side of the tracks with his "STOP" sign. As the train came closer it would blow it's whistle and then Grandpa would disappear behind the train and I always thought the train was going to take Grandpa away because I couldn't see him anymore. We would count the cars as they went by. As the caboose went by the man on the back would wave to us, and we would wave back and there would be Grandpa waving the cars on and turning back to us smiling and then everything was all right again.*  
 - Sandy

**We know that my grandfather had been a brakeman for New Haven RR since the 1920's. In his later years, he was a local fixture at the Main Street crossing and he loved his job. In fact, after his retirement, my family made a concerted effort to shield him from the fact that the crossing had become automated - we hope we were successful. He died in Danbury in 1973. - Sheila**

If anyone remembers the crossing shanty and William Stahley, the family would like to hear from you.

Once a main-stay, crossing gate tenders were phased out as railroads automated the crossings. Along the Maybrook Line, there were gate tenders at Main Street, Maple Avenue, Balmforth Avenue, White Street and Wildman Street. When a train left Brewster headed for Danbury a bell would ring in the shanty to warn of the train's coming. As the train approached, the tender would put down the gates and stand in the road holding a small black and white stop sign. The first gate tender jobs to go in the Danbury area were at Maple Avenue, Balmforth Avenue and White Street during the early 1950's. The gate tenders remained at Main Street and Wildman Street up until the Penn Central era in the early 1970's. According to a recent discussion on the website Railroad.net, there are still three crossing shanties in use in New England. They are all in Massachusetts in the towns of Beverly, Wakefield and West Medford.



A thank you to Peter McLachlan who assisted on the history of the shanties in Danbury.

## MUSEUM CALENDAR

June 8 (7:45pm)	Lincoln Ghost Train & Hyde Park Station - Jeff Armstrong
June 15 (7:45pm)	Model RR Scenery - Steve Mayerson
June 16 (7:00pm)	Board Meeting (Open to Members)
June 22 (7:45pm)	Steam Train Fest 2004 - Dan Gallo, Jr
June 29 (7:45pm)	From DRM Collection - DRM Library
July 6 (7:45pm)	New Haven RR - Pete McLachlan
July 13 (7:45pm)	Historic Presentation - DRM Library

Be sure to look for the full color version of this newsletter on our website: [www.danbury.org/drm/](http://www.danbury.org/drm/)



### Contact Information

Please contact us with submissions:  
Mail: The Danbury Railway Museum  
Attention: Newsletter  
PO Box 90, Danbury, CT 06813  
Phone: 203.778.8337  
Fax: 203.778.1836  
Email: [newsletter@danburyrail.org](mailto:newsletter@danburyrail.org)  
Editor: Carolyn Taylor

Printing by: Infinity Printing of Danbury

### **Change of Address**

If you move, please send your change of address to:  
Danbury Railway Museum,  
Attention: Membership Chairman  
PO Box 90, Danbury, CT 06813  
Via Email to [drmmembers@sbcglobal.net](mailto:drmmembers@sbcglobal.net)

