

 Vol 32, No 2
 Apr-Jun 2022

The newsletter of the Unadilla Valley Railway Society & Museum, PO Box 751, New Berlin NY 13411

---> SCHEDULE CHANGE <----

Please note that our monthly program meetings (held via Zoom) will change from the 3rd Saturday of the month to the 1st Saturday of the month starting in April. This is a permanent change.

So the next meeting is **Saturday, April 2, 2022, at 1:00 PM**. The topic will be "UV RR Buildings in New Berlin, Part 5: At the South End", by Paul Straney.

If you're not on the distribution list for the linkage email, and would like to be, let us know by email to uvrs@stny.rr.com.

Donation Summary

Since the first of the year, we have received donations from 23 of our members. We have received enough to proceed with our project of painting the roof. We have applied for a matching grant from a foundation in Norwich. We hope to receive a positive response on that in April and hope proceed with the project right after that.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH TO EVERYONE WHO HAS DONATED so far. If you would like to contribute, it's not too late. Make out your check to UVRS&M and mail it to PO Box 751, New Berlin NY 13411.

Roof Project

The picture below shows the rust on the roof of the depot that we're going to fix. Hopefully, work will start in late April.



Up and Down the Tracks

- *** New members: Kristine Edwards Martz (formerly of New Berlin), Joe Singlar (of Sidney), David Mumbulo (formerly of New Berlin), Richard Greco (new resident of New Berlin), Harvey Reynolds (of Sherburne).
- *** We are saddened to learn that David Slentz, a new member announced in the last issue of Pendragon, has passed away. Our condolences go out to his family.
- *** Talk to us: send email to uvrs@stny.rr.com .
- *** Be safe as you maneuver up & down the tracks this spring.

On the Back Cover: A picture supporting our theme of "South New Berlin" in this issue — Left to right are the South New Berlin station (which was still standing when the UV was shut down in 1960, but has been demolished since then), the Hovey Coal Shed, the South New Berlin plant of the Rockdale company, with a milk car and associated milk cans, and the edge of the I. L. Richer feed building. The date of the picture is unknown, but is probably in the 40s.

ZOOM MEETINGS CONTINUE

Starting in January, 2021, we have held our monthly program meetings via ZOOM. It is an easy-to-use on-line meeting facility in which participants can see and hear a presentation and each other. Our topics will continue to be the UV and other local interests. Our meetings are now scheduled for the 1st Saturday of each month at 1:00 PM (Eastern time). You may join us from anywhere in the country.

To participate, you'll need a computer with optional camera and microphone (as most laptops have nowadays), or a smart phone, internet access and a link (that we'll send you). Send an email to **uvrs@stny.rr.com** to let us know you're interested and we'll send you the link a few days ahead of the meeting. Then at the appointed time, click on the link to join the meeting. We look forward to seeing you at an upcoming meeting.

See our web site for late-breaking changes: www.uvrs.org .

Recordings of previous meetings can be found on our web site, UVRS.ORG > ABOUT US > RECENT PRESENTATIONS

Here are some of the recent presentations you will find there:

- "UV RR Buildings in NB. Part 1. UV Depot" by Paul S.
- "UV RR Buildings in NB, Part 2, Engine House" by Paul S.
- "Railroading in New Berlin, A Chronology" by Tom D.
- "UV RR Buildings in NB, Part 3, Coal Pocket & More" by Paul S.
- "Dairy & The UV: Getting Milk from the Farm to the Market" by Paul S.
- "New Berlin Junction" by Tom D.
- UV RR Buildings in NB, Part 4, The South End" by Paul S

Timetable — Schedule of Upcoming Events

| Sat | Apr 2 | 1:00 | Program meeting "UV RR Buildings in NB: Part 5, the South End" by Paul Straney | ZOOM | |
|-----|-------|------|--|-----------|--|
| Thu | Apr 7 | 1:00 | Board Meeting | Conf Call | |
| Thu | May 5 | 1:00 | Board Meeting | Conf Call | |
| Sat | May 7 | 1:00 | Program Meeting | ZOOM | |
| | | | "Dr. Lewis Morris, Owner of the UV | | |
| | | | 1904-1936 " by Tom DeForest | | |
| Thu | Jun 2 | 1:00 | Board Meeting | Conf Call | |
| Sat | Jun 4 | 1:00 | Program Meeting | ZOOM | |
| | | | Topic & Presenter TBA | | |

The schedule of when the museum will be open will be announced on our web site when that schedule has been established.

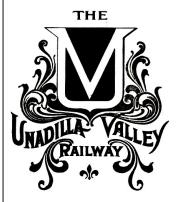
Notes:

UVRS&M: UVRS&M Museum, 10 Railroad St, New Berlin NY 13411
TBA: to be announced, see the web site.
To participate in ZOOM meetings or Conference Calls, send a request by email to uvrs@stny.rr.com
Check our web site at www.uvrs.org for meeting details and late changes.

If you have pictures, videos, stories or memories of the UV Railroad, we'd like a copy of them. If we could borrow the photos, we'll scan them in and add them to our picture data base. If you have memories, please write them down and send them to our email address: uvrs@stny.rr.com.

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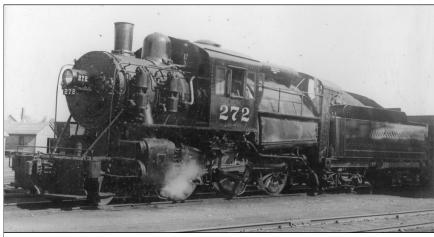
Growing Up Along the Unadilla Valley

by William Wellman

I was born in South New Berlin, NY, and grew up in the 1940's and 50's in that small town. And South New Berlin was indeed a small town, with a population of between 300 and 350. Located on the Chenango-Otsego County border, it was (and is) about 45 miles south of Utica, and 22 miles west of Oneonta. In that era kids generated their own activities. TV was in its infancy, and there were no shopping malls. Perhaps we held the world we were becoming acquainted with in a little more awe and wonder than our children do today.

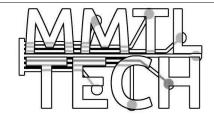
The Unadilla Valley Railway entered my consciousness when I was about five or six years old. My father and I went to the GLF feed store, where our neighbor Dorr Young worked. We walked, because we didn't have a car. Just as we arrived, the daily south-bound arrived from New Berlin and stopped, probably to unload some less-than-carload shipments at the station, just adjacent to the store. It was headed by the most impressive thing I had ever seen in my young life, a steam-spouting, fire-breathing, thumping piece of machinery that seemed alive. It had two cabs along the boiler, each occupied by a man in bib overalls. I was fascinated. As it left town with a great amount of commotion, whistling, and loud exhaust, I was turned into a rail fan for life.

It was a great deal later that I finally figured out exactly what I had seen. I had seen a camelback, also known as a Mother Hubbard, almost certainly number 272, which came to the Unadilla Valley from the O&W at the same time that the Salzbergs purchased the New Berlin branch from that road in 1941. It was later wrecked at Rockdale on February 6, 1945, while pushing a snow plow, and was never used again.



#272, a "Mother Hubbard" or "Camelback" locomotive.

A few years later, as I was walking home from school for lunch (yes we walked home for lunch and then came back), I saw a most unusual sight. The railroad tracks ran south opposite the school, so you could see passing trains with no problem. I heard an unfamiliar whistle at the Olmstead farm crossing to the north. By that time I could recognize the whistles of the engines that were



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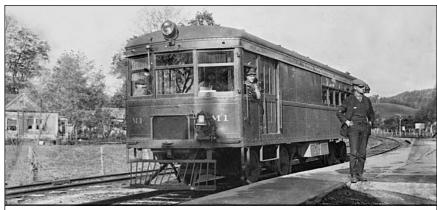
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used on the line, so I knew something different was coming. Sure enough, a strange looking contraption, red, and with the appearance of a bus on rails, came down the line and proceeded south. I had just seen, for the first and last time, the ill-fated Brill rail car that was involved in the wreck on June 24, 1924, at Scott's Cut near Bridgewater that killed two men, and which was later in 1929 involved in another accident near Sweet's Crossing. This car, which the UV purchased to substitute for steam-powered passenger trains, weighed 14-1/2 tons, carried 28 passengers and had been built in 1923. Brill was a famous trolley and interurban car builder in Philadelphia and also built a series of gasengine rail cars, primarily for short line service. It was almost new at the time of the first accident. I don't know of its ultimate disposition, and can only presume it was on its way to the scrapper when I saw it on a bright fall day.



#M-1, the Brill car, before the crash.

South New Berlin, my hometown, was typical of the small villages in the valley at that time. Life centered around school, church, and the everyday activities of life. Nobody had much money, certainly not my family, but everyone seemed to get along, do their tasks, and help their neighbors. Everyone knew everyone else, sometimes too well, it seemed to us kids. Mrs. Utter ran the Dimmock Hollow Telephone Company switchboard from her home on South Street, and could usually tell you, with a high degree of accuracy, when someone would be back home or in their place of business. Mr. Miner ran Parker's Department Store, which was always a treat to visit, especially at Christmas time, when the toys glittered in the basement. Walt Church's store had a treasure trove of nuts, bolts, stovepipe, and other hardware. Some of the goods for the hardware store arrived via Bagg's Express, a firm that Walter Bagg ran from his home on East Street, but a lot of it arrived as express or less-than-carload shipments on the railroad. If you wanted a bite to eat, or maybe something to sooth your throat, the Valley House provided both. However, for those of us not yet of age, the Blue Jay Restaurant was the place to go for ice cream, sodas and similar goodies.

In addition to church activities, the school always had, or so it seemed, something going on. The three sports of the time, baseball, basketball and football, took up the interest of those involved. To this day, I have difficulty convincing my friends that such a thing as six-man football ever existed. Most of us played in the band, and also sang in the chorus. One of the jokes was "that if



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the band played, the chorus didn't sing." At least not at the same time, since there were only about 50 of us in the entire high school. Every year, the music teacher worked especially hard with the junior band in the spring, so that he could promote enough of us to the senior band in time to play "Pomp and Circumstance" at graduation. The village had one parade a year, on Memorial Day. The band, the firemen, the Odd Fellows, the American Legion and every kid with a bike and some bunting marched to the cemetery to honor our ancestors and veterans.



The former South New Berlin Central School (now privately owned).

Life might not have been prosperous, but it was predictable. Somewhat like the river itself, it flowed along, usually placid but inexorable, and not subject to many outside influences.

To say that South New Berlin had an industrial complex may be just a little pretentious, but what we had in the way of industry was clustered along the UV tracks (see map on the following page). Starting from the north, there was Sisson's feed store, the Valley Supply Company, Dixon's lumber store in the old Eagle Condensed Milk plant, Ed Hovey's coal storage, and the Chenango Farms milk plant. Next to the station, which had a platform scale, bay window and outhouse, was the I. L. Richer GLF feed store. South of the Route 23 crossing, which was protected by a wig-wag signal as well as the normal crossbucks, was the Unadilla Oil Company and the site of the Scott feed store. By my teens the feed store was gone, and Unadilla Oil didn't receive oil by tank car, although the pipes were still in place. There were still remnants of a cattle loading chute by Sisson's, and between there and the station, along the main track, could be found the foundations for an old water tank. There was one passing track, which started at the north and



Wig-Wag signal at the Route 23 crossing.

served the station and the GLF store. It also served as a team track, where

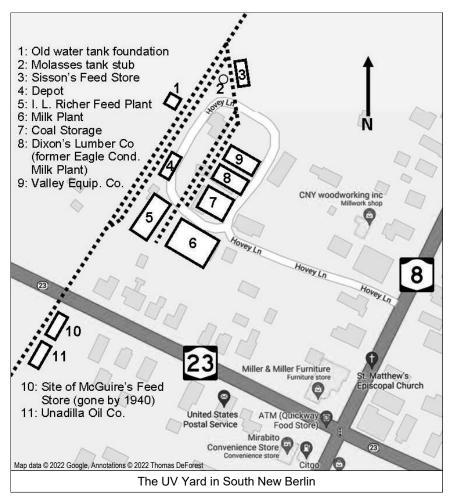
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carload shipments could be received or loaded. All the rest of the trackage consisted of spurs originating at the north end.

Sisson's received most of their feed from Buffalo, and I recall seeing Buffalo Creek boxcars there often. The Buffalo Creek served a lot of the big grain terminals in Buffalo. Occasionally, Sisson's would get a tank car full of molasses to mix with the feed, which was stored in an underground tank. If it was summertime, you can bet it also attracted a lot of flies.

Not too often Valley Supply, a farm equipment dealer, would get a flatcar of farm machinery, usually from Iowa, where the main John Deere plants were located.

Dixon's lumber business didn't last too long, but while they were going they would get carloads of lumber in boxcars. As mentioned above, they were located in the old Eagle Condensed Milk plant, which was a Borden operation.



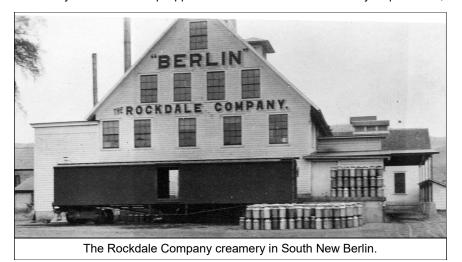
but was out of business for many years by the time of my youth. Next to this site was a large ice house, which had been used by the old plant. It had extremely thick walls filled with sawdust to keep the ice from melting.

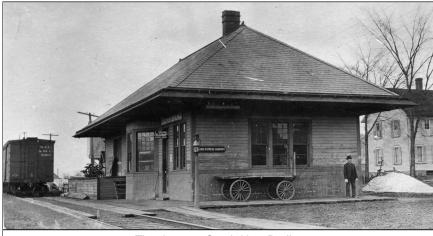
Ed Hovey was the O&W and later the UV station agent. He also ran a coal business. In those days, if you didn't heat with wood, you heated with coal. Ed sold a lot of it, along with cement and some building supplies. For years, he delivered coal with a Model T Ford truck. Most of his coal arrived in standard Delaware and Hudson, Erie or Lackawanna hopper cars, although I recall seeing a Bessemer and Lake Erie hopper there once, with six-wheel trucks and a 70 ton capacity.

I. L. Richer's GLF feed store was a big supplier to farmers in the area. It got some of its supply shipped from New Berlin, where Richer had its main plant, but also received some from grain merchants elsewhere that required mixing. Dorr Young, my neighbor mentioned earlier who worked there, was a very strong man. It may not be true, but I was told he could throw a bag of feed in the air on the dock, and jump in the truck and catch it.

Chenango Farms was the firm that owned the large milk receiving plant and creamery. They had stopped shipping milk by rail by the time I was around, but still received coal in hopper cars to fuel their two large Erie Boiler Works boilers that supplied steam for the plant. The plant only processed milk by the 50's, but during World War II they made powdered milk and also made cheese. My father, who worked there as night watchman for a time, used to bring home cheese curd, which we thought was a great treat. The powdered milk was made in a separate building where the milk was heated and put through a machine with large rollers, coming out in thin white sheets before it was ground and bagged. This creamery was built by the Rockdale Company, which also had a plant at Rockdale, near Mt. Upton.

The station itself was a busy place. Although there was no passenger traffic to take care of, there was a constant stream of goods going in and out. The daily train would stop opposite the station with the Railway Express car,





The depot at South New Berlin.

two large planks would be placed from the car to the station platform, and all manner of things would be unloaded. Church's Hardware got a lot of their merchandise this way, as well as other shipments arriving for the farms and private citizens of the community. Trunks, boxes, eggs and cream were typical outbound freight. For years, Niles Grover, who lived on the hill east of town, made a morning trip to the station to leave his full cream cans and pick up the empties that had been left by the preceding train.

Two big construction projects brought some increased business to the railroad in the 50's. First, the South New Berlin-New Berlin Center section of Route 8 was rebuilt. Gravel for the work was taken from a pit near Davis Crossing. In order to mine the pit, Christiani Construction, who had the job, shipped in the biggest power shovel I had ever seen. It arrived in town on a heavy-duty flat car with six-wheeled trucks, and was unloaded with great care before it was moved to the gravel pit. That was probably the heaviest shipment that the UV had ever seen.

In order to mix concrete for the road, a batch plant was set up along the railroad at Christiansen's farm, north of town. A temporary siding was installed, and soon cement hopper cars were being unloaded through an under-rail chute to supply the work. Most of the cars were from the D & H, and probably originated at the Howe's Cave cement plant. The work went on from early spring to fall. When the road was complete, the siding was pulled, leaving few traces of its existence.

Several years later, an overloaded truck crossed the Unadilla River bridge on East Street. The old iron truss bridge couldn't take it, and was badly damaged, although the truck made it across. The State erected a temporary bridge, and let a contract to Bero Construction for a new bridge, as well as the reconstruction of Route 23 along East Street. Bero didn't ship in their cement by rail, but they did bring in the bridge girders on the UV. The girders arrived in two shipments, with the girders in the center car of three on open ended gondolas. This shipment wasn't the heaviest, that honor going to the diesel shovel, but it was most certainly the longest that the UV handled.

All in all, the yard was a constant source of traffic for the railroad. On any given day, there was usually a car or two to be dropped, or empties to be picked up. There were usually six to eight cars there. The most I can remember is twelve scattered around the various sidings.

By 1947 I was a confirmed rail fan, and had begun to acquire a little knowledge of railroads in general and the UV in particular. I started hitchhiking to New Berlin to explore the UV shops and station. Paul Stillman, the New Berlin agent, was an extremely kindly man and would answer my many questions with great patience. He would also lend me his copies of *Railroad* magazine, which only fueled further questions on my part. The shops and yard complex were fascinating, and I tried hard to be on my best behavior so I wouldn't jeopardize my privileges.

When I first entered the New Berlin enginehouse, it seemed big, dark and mysterious. The shop area was on the west side, and had an array of machinery I had never seen before, all connected by belts to overhead shafts. There was a pit in the floor between the track for working under the engines, and, in addition to smaller machines, a huge wheel-turning lathe and an equally large press. Separated by a wall, the space to the east was occupied by the tracks used to store the engines and some other equipment. It had a dirt floor, and despite the presence of a big stove with a hopper built around it, for drying sand, and the normal presence of a warm back-up engine, was colder than the devil in the winter time. Somewhat later, the enginehouse was refurbished, with a new boiler, heating system, overhead lights, and paved floor installed. The shop was well equipped, and performed all the routine maintenance on the locomotives and other equipment. This included periodic boiler washes, brake shoe replacement, and all the other jobs necessary to keep the engines in good



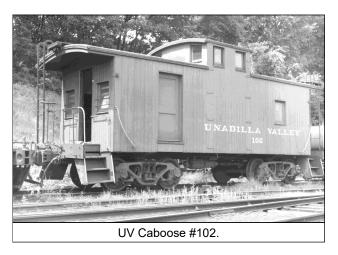
The Shop area of the enginehouse in New Berlin.

repair. I can't recall the UV sending any of the engines off for minor or major repairs to another railroad shop. In fact, during the war, the machinists did special work to fix machinery for I. L. Richer and the Bendix Scintilla plant in Sidney.

Just to the north of the enginehouse was a three-way stub switch. Now, most railway switches are built with points to direct the cars correctly onto another track. Stub switches were relatively rare, even then. In this case, the train crew had the choice of three tracks controlled by the same switch.

About a half mile north of New Berlin was the wye. Normally the wye was deserted, occupied only by the flanger and by some "Maximum Traction" street car trucks that the Salzbergs had retained from one of their scrapping jobs, possibly in Boston. South of the road crossing were the old O&W yards, which were pretty much empty after the UV bought the New Berlin branch. Other than cars for Richer or the Sheffield Farms creamery, the only regular occupants were the snowplows or an occasional tank car for the fuel dealer. Both Fred Pugh and Bob Mohowski have detailed the yards exceptionally well in their fine books.

After I had made a number of trips to New Berlin, usually on Saturdays, I screwed up my courage and asked if could ride the train. I was absolutely delighted when I was told to hop aboard. Into the caboose I went, for the first of many trips up and down the valley. Operations in those days called for an early train to Bridgewater and return to New Berlin, then assembling the southbound for its trip to New Berlin Junction. I was usually too late for the northern ride, but would be aboard for the southern trek. Traffic consisted of whatever had been brought in from Bridgewater, empties going back to their home roads, and the milk cars from Dairymen's League and Sheffield Farms. Dairymen's League was still using some of the half-cylindrical bulk milk containers that were transferred to trucks on their arrival in Metro New York. We would pick up the O&W Railway Express baggage car, which was usually parked at the station overnight, assemble the train and tack on the caboose. I would immediately make for the caboose cupola, and remain there for the trip. The view from the cupola was a joy of farms, homes and verdant Unadilla valley hills.



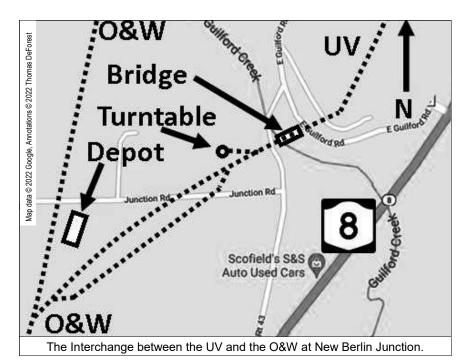
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On to South New Berlin, where we'd add or drop a car or two, and then to Mt. Upton. The big shipper there was the Dairymen's League plant, which was to the east of Route 8, and down a considerable grade. At that time, they shipped two or three cars of milk daily, plus received plenty of coal for the plant. The rest of the train stayed at the station while the crew ran down the spur, and with considerable effort pulled the loaded cars up to the main and added them to the train. On one of my early trips, while waiting for the crew to bring back the milk cars. I glanced out the cupola window. Lo and behold, there was a tombstone next to the tracks. I climbed down to read the inscription. It was the grave of one of the most famous of Mt. Upton's inhabitants. No, not some early stalwart of the valley, but that of a race horse. Lady Upton was a trotter, winner of many races around the turn of the century, and famous enough to merit an ornate headstone upon her death. The grave site was the subject of a sketch in Joe Fasley's "Along the Iron Pike," a popular feature in Railroad magazine. The last time I looked, the gravestone was still there. Once we had completed any other work, the train would proceed south to New Berlin Junction, the connection with the O&W.



Dairyman's League plant in Mt. Upton, on a spur across Route 8.

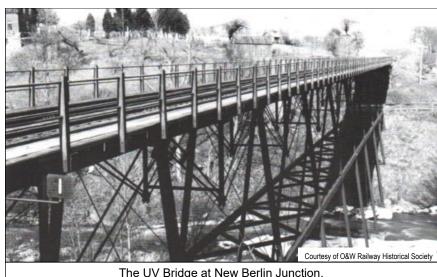
New Berlin Junction was the railroad name for East Guilford, and there wasn't a lot there. Just north of Sidney, it had no station, and really no need for one. Passenger traffic had ended years earlier, and there were no freight customers. Facilities consisted of a passing siding and a spur to the turntable, which the Salzbergs had installed after they bought the branch from the O&W. The only other notable feature was the bridge just to the north, which was the longest and the highest on the railroad. Folks who worked for the UV would probably disagree with me about the last point, and might very well say the turntable was the most notable, if not best loved, feature. This Armstrong table was notoriously balky and difficult to move. In winter, it was at its worst. I recall overhearing a conversation in New Berlin once, when the track workers were detailing the actions taken before the coming winter. "We've put in a mixture of grease, oil, alcohol and anti-freeze in that blank blank turntable. That should



hold the blank blank thing for a little while." I suspect that year's exotic mixture was no more effective than that used the year before.

By William Wellman with pictures from the UVRS&M Collection.

— To Be continued in the next issue...



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#### The UV Store

The Life and Times of a Small Railroad, by William S. Young, 2009, 120 pages. A definitive account of the UV Railway. \$30.

Index to Fred Pugh's "Days Along the Buckwheat & Dandelion", by Lee Stone. 11 pages, hundreds of entries. \$6, free shipping.

The Story of the Unadilla Valley Railroad as Told in Newspaper Articles, by Tom DeForest, 2016. 330 articles from over 50 newspapers. 105 pages, includes a 9-page index. \$25.

Topographic Maps of the UV, 29 pages of maps of the whole UV system in full color with a binder, \$20.

**Cat's Meow** figure of the UV #200 locomotive. Wood, 7" wide, 3.5" high, brand new, \$20. (NOTE: this is not related to the Cat's Meow store in Sherburne NY).

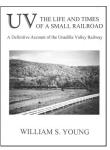
Note Cards of UV Rolling Stock and buildings. \$5 for set of 5 different images. 4 different sets are available (20 different images total).

Orange **UV Hat with logo**, one size fits all, \$12.

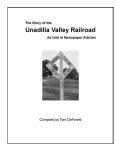
(Contact us for shipping costs. Add 8% NY sales tax if shipped to a NY address. See our web site for details).

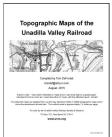
We have a number of articles and reprints for sale. Most are \$3 each. Check our web site: www.uvrs.org.

Questions? Call Sandy Kilmer, UV Storekeeper. at 607-548-7007.













| Unadilla Valley Railway Society & Museum Membership Form                                                                                                                                     |  |  |  |
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| e-mail address                                                                                                                                                                               |  |  |  |
| Membership Categories:                                                                                                                                                                       |  |  |  |
| ☐ Conductor, \$250 / year ☐ Fireman, \$50 / year                                                                                                                                             |  |  |  |
| ☐ Engineer, \$100 / year ☐ Brakeman, \$20 / year                                                                                                                                             |  |  |  |
| ☐ Add'l family members at same address, \$5 each / yr                                                                                                                                        |  |  |  |
| ☐ Donation \$ Total enclosed: \$                                                                                                                                                             |  |  |  |
| A list of member names and categories will be published annually. If you would prefer <b>not</b> to be included, please check here:                                                          |  |  |  |
| Dues for new members who join after July 1st cover all of the following calendar year.                                                                                                       |  |  |  |
| Dues are payable on January 1st of each year. Keep your membership<br>up to date to receive copies of our Pendragon newsletter and invitations to<br>all of our meetings and special events. |  |  |  |
| Make payable to UVRS&M, mail to UVRS&M, PO Box 751, New Berlin NY 13411                                                                                                                      |  |  |  |
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