

One Man's Recollections of Boyhood Life Alongside the UV

[Note—I recently found the following unsigned letter in my files. Though I have no way to prove it, the writer's year of birth, and the references to Mike Holdridge and to "the book" make me think it was from the late Fred Pugh. I thought you'd like to read it. —G.W.]

Having been born in 1949, I do not remember steam. Only once I think I remember the steam engine going across the crossing in West Edmeston. It may have been in March 1957, when the same shot as in the book of Number 6 in front of Pete Allen's garage in Leonardsville was taken. I have heard Charles Turner of South Edmeston mention that Number 6 was fired up occasionally if Number 200 was in the roundhouse for repairs.

Mike Holdridge and I spent a lot of time at the crossing in West Edmeston watching the train go by. We used to hear it blow for the Rt. 8 crossing below the village and we would have to be quick to get to the crossing in the Village or to the I.L. Richer feed store to see Number 200 go by.

Once we were in back of the feed store when up came this little center-cab engine. It was early morning, probably 9 o'clock, and I remember that this engine spun continually trying to make the curved grade in back of the store. It was my only time to see it run and years later I saw SNY Number 300 in the WAG shops in Galeton, Pa. I understand that both Number 5 and Number 300 of the SNY are scrapped now.

One of our playgrounds was the feed store. Earl Genung managed the store and Harold Larabee was the delivery man. The railroad brought in carloads of 100-lb. sacks of feed and I remember Harold unloaded the cars with a hand truck. The car was spotted on the siding and a large steel plate was laid down between the building and car. If the car was spotted wrong then it was jacked along with a large pole used on the rail and wheel. I remember the smells, especially the cars smelling like molasses and jute. Most cars were picked up in the morning and taken to Bridgewater. The train cut off the engine below the south switch and would back in on the north switch. It would either go back out the north switch and back down the main line or sometimes back out the south switch. William (Pete) Schermerhorn was brakeman or conductor. I can't re-

member Howard Cadwell and I think it was because he was gone around 1956 or so. Hoddie Wiggins might have been the other man in the caboose. I remember John Hoxie and Bruce Harshberger being in the engine. At 12:00 noon they were headed south (highball); no stops were made. The engine always went hood end forward when going north and cab end forward when going south. The turntable in Bridgewater had been gone for years and why they did not use the wye, I do not know.

Another favorite spot for us was at the Sheffield Farms milk plant. The plant was run by Bill Sweet. Clair Maxson, Tim Jaquay, Ray Corbin and Alonzo Wright used to work there. Coal was the only thing brought in by car as I remember. The milk tank cars had been taken off the line and all milk was taken out by tractor trailer. The switch on the south for the milk station was south of the highway directly across from the door of the freight part of the railroad station. As long as I can remember, no cars were ever brought in from the south. All cars of coal were brought in from the north switch, so they must have brought the coal up from the south and backed in. Although there were two tracks across the road, one was always tarred over.

Coal cars, when brought in from the north, were spotted next to a concrete hole 25 feet north of the building. The cars were shoveled out if it did not all run out the bottom. The cars were big to a 7- or 8-year-old, and very black. I suspect they were Lackawanna cars. Mike and I would climb up on the cars and run all over the coal. It was great fun. We would also look the cars over from stem to stern just as we did the feed cars. We even ran all over the tops of the box cars. I'm glad Earl never knew or he would have had a heart attack. Saturdays I went to the milk station a lot. I sat in the office with Bill Sweet and also stood out in the area where the cans came in the building. I'd watch them dump the cans and just hang around until I heard the whistle. From the north they whistled for Leonardsville crossing and any crossing coming south. I'd stand in the door of the milk station where the cars used to be loaded and look out as Bruce flew by. I don't know how good the track was, but he sure knew when dinner time was. One last thought before closing: When the tracks were pulled and the train went by the south switch for the feed store for the last time, they gave the switch lock to Earl Genung. They never gave him the key.

At Last, Some Funding

Our purpose for existing as a railway society is and always has been to awaken, stimulate, and invigorate an interest in railroading, especially in railroads that have served our area. We have advertised and recruited. We have organized and established recognition. We have gathered artifacts and we have set up a museum. We have reached out for financial support from local establishments and applied for grants. And this is a lot of hard work.

Often our fund-raising has had limited results. We thank Stewart's Shops and New York Central Mutual Insurance for their continuing support as well as many individuals who have done their part. But when it comes to grants, it has appeared as though we were boxing air—we have not gotten any.

That is, until now.

In the fall of 2000 we read about the "Chenango Arts Fund Decentralization." At first we told ourselves that of all the foundations we had approached, the aims of this one should be the furthest from our own. But like before, we said, there is no harm trying, so we did.

We inquired of the Chenango County Council of the Arts, which sponsored the grant, and found out there were two possible ways a request by us might qualify: 1) We could be funded for the fees of speakers for the year; and 2) We could be paid to do a model representation of our operation. Considering the more enduring character of the

second choice, we chose to do a layout in O scale of the New Berlin O&W depot, yard, and approaches, to be set up in the freight bay of the depot.

Surprise! We were granted the funding!

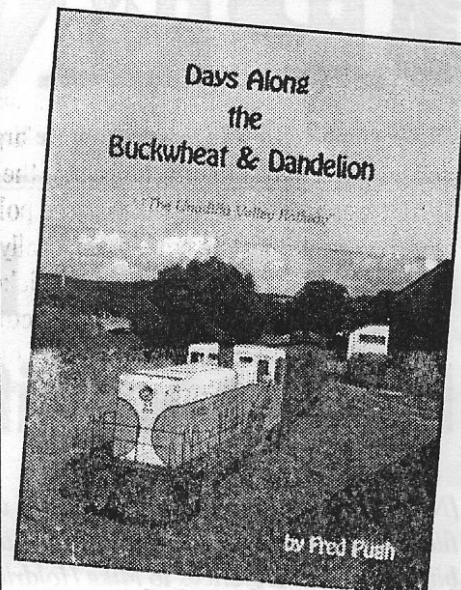
On March 1, 2001, at a formal ceremony in the Arts Council's auditorium in Norwich, the Unadilla Valley Railway Society was one of a number of recipients of grants from the fund. Your president received the grant in the name of the society.

The society received a grant of \$820 for the sole purpose of paying the expenses of the O scale representation described above. We are obliged to restrict its use to expenditures for this purpose only, to complete the project before December 31, 2001, to submit a final report by that time, and to give credit to New York State and the Chenango County Council of the Arts with all publicity.

How the responsibility returns to us. You and I together, collectively as well as individually, must accomplish this task. Your skill, your knowledge, your background and training, as well as your availability (however limited that may be) are being called upon. Please respond in whatever ways you can. We look forward to accomplishing great things. Let's get to it!

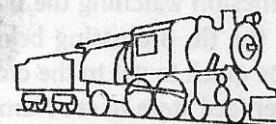
Remember, "this project is made possible with public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts, administered by the Chenango County Council of the Arts."

—GEORGE WOLFANGLE



Flash!

We have a limited number of copies of "Days Along the Buckwheat & Dandelion," the definitive work about the Unadilla Valley Railway, by Fred Pugh. When they are gone, it is not expected they any more will be printed. You may have them at \$45.00 per copy plus mailing on a first-come, first-served basis until they run out. Don't be left without yours!



The Pendragon's next scheduled stop at your station is June 2001.

Unadilla Valley Railway Society
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