

THE PENNDRAGON

Vol. VI · Number 2 The Newsletter of the Unadilla Valley Railway Society & Museum · PO Box 751, New Berlin, NY 13411

Spring 2002

O&W Historian To Speak August 5

Three speakers have signed on to give presentations during the upcoming meetings of the Unadilla Valley Railway Society.

On August 5, John Taibi is scheduled to make a return engagement to present a new talk, "The O&W and Her Stations." Mr. Taibi previously addressed the society in August 1997 with a talk on the O&W depot in Munnsville, which he restored and turned into his own home.

Albert McKie will join us in September with his presentation, "Touring Canada by Rail." And in October William S. Young will give a presentation entitled "Dr. Lewis Ruth-erford Morris."

News & Notes

UV Book Still Available

We still have some copies of Fred Pugh's book *Days Along the Buckwheat & Dandelion: The Unadilla Valley Railway*. The cost remains \$45. When they run out, they run out.

Notice

If a red dot appears next to your name on your address label, your membership has expired. This will be the last issue of "The Pen-dragon" you will receive until you renew your membership.

Items for Publication

If you have an item or photo you would like to submit for publication, write to The Editor, UV Railway Society and Museum, PO Box 751, New Berlin NY 13411.

Hats On!

If you haven't yet purchased your UVRS hat, now's a great time to catch up. These "Salzberg Orange" beauties are sold at every Society meeting for \$6.00 each, or you can send \$6.00 plus \$1.00 postage to UVRS Hats, P.O. Box 751, New Berlin NY 13411.



RAILWAY HISTORY

'Grass Roots Railroad'

A Look at the Unadilla Valley Railway in 1944

[This article is excerpted from a story that appeared in the May 1944 issue of Trains magazine. —Ed.]

BY HENRY P. EIGHMEY

When the short freights of the Unadilla Valley go chuffing up the line to Bridgewater and return, people along the way wave a friendly greeting—and more than that, they see to it that the products of their farms along the valley travel to the outside world over the tracks of the UV. The little pike can well be termed the 'Pride of the Valley.'

In the present era it has been a common occurrence to have some large railroad system take over a small railroad and either add its trackage as a feeder for the system or junk the entire outfit. But the Unadilla's move is a horse of another color, for here we find one of the little independent lines purchasing a section of a larger system and operating it in conjunction with its original line.

October 21, 1941, marked the date when the last train operated over the "New Berlin Branch of the New York, Ontario & Western system." On that day the Unadilla Valley Railway became the owner of the 29 miles of track stretching from New Berlin Junction to Edmeston, and with the addition of trackage rights over the O&W into Sidney, N. Y., from New Berlin Junction. Not only did the UV buy the line, but it also purchased O&W locomotive No. 272, two cabooses, and one snow flanger.

The Unadilla Valley Railway now boasts approximately 50 miles of track rambling through a sleepy little valley where, as the schoolroom geography books term it, "the principal occupation is agriculture." Farm products, including vegetables, cattle, milk, and chickens, afford a source of income for the railroad, while incoming commodities



needed by the farm folk are another source of revenue. Add to these, several factories, including the large Kraft-Phoenix establishment at South Edmeston and an egg-drying and vegetable-drying plant at New Berlin, and one can readily see that the UV should not have to exist in vain.

About 10,000 tons of anthracite moves over the Unadilla in a year's time, and almost 1000 tons of livestock is hauled behind its little locomotives. Several hundred cars of milk annually furnishes another source of revenue, while cheese from the Kraft-Phoenix plant and carloads and l.c.l. shipments of every kind of merchandise imaginable roll over its rails. In close to a half-century of service, the Unadilla has rarely maintained less than two trains per day over its original 20-mile line, and now it operates one train per day over the newly acquired 29-mile line from Edmeston to New Berlin Junction. Only one serious wreck is listed in the little pike's history; close to 50 employees are on the payroll; and a couple of thousand dollars rolls into the treasury of the town of New Berlin in the form of annual taxes.

Usually 10 or 12 cars make up the Unadilla's trains, and four years ago 21 cars were hauled in one freight. The rails run through a picturesque valley and the locomotives have little trouble with their daily tonnage, although

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It's Time To Pitch In and Help

Well, the time has come to inform all the members of the UV Railway Society of the financial status of the organization.

First of all, the organization is in need of the members to pay their dues in order to meet the debts. Our expenses include the mortgage, upkeep of the building, electric bills, and insurance. So, if you feel able, please *help*.

We also need some physical help with the cleaning and repairs.

Here are some of the things that have been accomplished. We sold Mr. Pugh's books, making a ten-dollar profit per book, and we had some hats that sold for \$6 each.

We received a grant from Chenango arts

for our model railroad display. We received money from Stewart's Convenience Stores, with which we purchased display cases which we now have.

We are always looking for speakers for our summer meetings. When we are unable to have a speaker, we have excellent videos. We have quite a few nice railroad books that members may borrow.

Keep in touch with me. If there is anything you would like to talk over with me, please call me at 607-847-6273. My mailing address is P.O. Box 243, New Berlin NY 13411.

—SAM SENN

PRESIDENT, UNADILLA VALLEY RAILWAY SOCIETY

Letters

Still Waiting for Action

Since your early days as a railroad society I have been keeping my eyes on what you have been doing.

When it appeared to be faltering in the purchase of an appropriate museum building I spoke to your attorney and agreed to back you up financially in its purchase.

I expected that you folks would be making some of the payments, but to date you have not.

If you have looked at the stock market at all this year you know many people have been hurt bad. I myself have been hit. I don't know how much longer I can keep up paying off

your debt without your getting involved. Please do *something*.—A.D.

No News Is Not Good News

A few months ago a friend from out of state joined me for a tour of the museum. As a result, he became a member of the society. Now he tells me he has not received an issue of *The Pendragon* since he got the one you handed him at the museum. I haven't received one either. Can you confirm that we are on your membership list?—Bill D.

[*Sorry. As at other times, we are running late in putting out The Pendragon. Be assured you both are members and will get the newsletter as soon as it comes out.*—Ed.]

Grass Roots

► Continued from front page

at South Edmeston the ramp to the cheese factory climbs about five per cent, causing the little locomotives to churn their drivers in pushing cars into the siding.

It isn't hard to find the Unadilla's yards in New Berlin—any of the natives readily point the way down a side street of the town to the small two-story building on Jaquith Avenue where the business of the railroad is transacted. Behind this structure is the original terminal of the road, with a four-stall enginehouse, freight house, and several smaller buildings which adequately take care of the needs of the Unadilla.

If we pay our visit to the yards around noon, we will probably see either locomotive No. 4 or No. 5, 2-6-2 type, resting on the tracks leading into the enginehouse, with smoke lazily rising from its stack. These two Prairies do the bulk of the hauling on the Bridgewater run. Within the enginehouse we catch a glimpse of another boiler front, and upon investigation we find No. 1, an old-time 4-4-0 with a high stack, used as a spare locomotive and for bucking snow in the winter. The snow is a sizable problem at times, according to some of the New Berlin residents. The fourth locomotive on the roster is the former No. 272 of the O&W, a 2-6-0.

A rather unique feature of this little independent line is the lack of a time-card. A question concerning the schedule on the 20-mile Bridgewater run brings a laugh from one of the brakemen, who informs the world at large that "there hasn't been a time-card since we quit hauling passengers 10 years ago."

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