



Black River Railroad Historical Trust
 P.O. Box 232
 Ringoes, NJ 08551



BLACK RIVER RAILROAD HISTORICAL TRUST

THE GRIP

Winter 2009

Free

Black River & Western Railroad		2009 Special Events
May through October	Regular Season	On Saturday, May 2, our regular season opens, with excursions every Saturday and Sunday through the last weekend in October. Unless otherwise noted, trains run on our regular schedule of four round trips each Sat and Sun. Regular excursions also run on Memorial Day (Monday, May 25).
June 19–21	Railroad Days	Ride a passenger train or caboose train, and see special equipment on display at Ringoes station. Kids can ring the bell of a steam locomotive and blow locomotive horns. See speeder and diesel horn demonstrations, and HO, O, and G scale layouts! Photo freight on Friday.
September 19 & 20	The Great Train Robbery	Kids, bring your cap gun, cowboy hat, and bandanna and help the Sheriff protect the train against the dreaded Covered Bridge Gang! Proceeds from the sale of Black River Bucks will fund railroad restoration projects.
October	Crazy Train Corn Maize	Hitch a ride in our haywagon car to our enormous 10-acre corn maze and pumpkin patch.
November & December	Santa Express	Santa and his elves will be on board the train to greet each child and give each one a candy cane. Once the train arrives at Ringoes, there is plenty of time for photos with Santa.
November & December	North Pole Express	Come aboard this evening train for an exciting journey to the North Pole to meet Santa Claus. Santa's elves will lead a sing-along of familiar Christmas carols on the brightly lit train, and Santa himself will greet each child.

For more information, visit brrht.org or contact us at info@brrht.org

Light at the End of the Tunnel for #60— Part 2

The dream of steam will soon be reality

by Bill Winecker

In any large project, the devil is in the details. The restoration of our beloved steam engine, #60, is no exception. *The Grip* reported in the Winter 2008 issue that 60 might be running by the end of 2008. Unfortunately, that did not happen. It was not due to a lack of interest, however, or even unforeseen problems. It just takes a long time to get it right with a 72-year-old locomotive.

The group of steam gods, led by fearless leader Paul Nicholson, has made great progress. All the flues and tubes are in, the superheaters have been installed, the smoke box has been reassembled, and the smoke box cover has been reinstalled. The smoke box cover is the face of the locomotive, and she is smiling again. All of the boiler jacketing is on and the backhead has been reassembled. The task of re-graphiting the firebox and smoke box cover—certainly worthy of an episode of the TV show “Dirty Jobs”—has been completed.

So as of this writing, what remains to be done? The sand dome has to be put on, and the running gear needs a little work. Then it is only a question of completing paperwork and getting the final blessing from the FRA.

In a few short months, our faithful restorers will have finished huffing and puffing, and 60 will be running under her own steam. Words cannot express what it has meant to me to be part of such an important project that is woven into the history of America, the Black River and Western Railroad, and now my own life, giving me memories I will cherish forever. ♦

An Excellent Year for the Black River Railroad Historic Trust

The Black River Railroad Historical Trust had a great season in 2008. We acquired some new equipment, and made progress in restoring pieces we already owned. We also expanded our train operations, and with our Pumpkin Junction trains in October, we really showed what we are capable of doing.

Our volunteers, of course, are what made all of this possible; and members and friends alike participated enthusiastically in running our events, training for new roles, and organizing festivities. Without them, none of what we achieved in 2008 would have been possible, and we hope to continue to expand our “family” in 2009, with new initiatives like a volunteer recruitment day. Read about our accomplishments below.



Photo by Jeffrey A. Lubchansky

Train Operations

- Throughout the month of October, we managed to work our Pumpkin Junction (PJX) trains in with our regularly scheduled passenger trains,

story continues on page 6

A Letter from the Editor

There is a lot of energy and excitement at Black River these days, and it is really great to see. Our operations expanded last year, with the addition of the Pumpkin Junction trains that took hundreds of passengers each weekend in October to the corn maze and pumpkin patch, running on a schedule with our regular trains. Our North Pole Express and Santa trains were practically sold out before the first one left the station. And members everywhere are active, training for new roles, talking to the public, and reviving old traditions like picnics and holiday parties.

In the meantime, it has been a while since you have seen *The Grip*. The reason for the delay is simple: my trusty newsletter editor (my wife) has been buried in a thesis for her Masters in Spanish translation from Rutgers. She has now emerged from the pile of papers, and here's the latest issue. We have included articles and photos several members sent in response to my last appeal. Please keep those contributions coming!

Of course, while it is good to have *The Grip* back on track, the newsletter is not the only way to receive information about the Black River Railroad Historic Trust. The members portal on the BRRHT home page (www.brrht.org) should be your

Photo by Dick Hague



The crowds at Pumpkin Junction

primary source for news about Trust programs, projects, and events; from crew rosters to cookouts, everything you need is there. You will still receive postcard reminders about our monthly meetings, but in between, please refer to our website.

So keep checking those event schedules, and keep coming out to participate. With our steam engine #60 on schedule to return to business soon, the 2009 season should be even better than last year. And that will be quite a feat!

Scott Kwiatkowski

Grip contributions may be sent to:
TheGrip@brrht.org

- We bought the Fairmont crane and pony cart from the railroad. Joe and Pete Monaco, George Cevera, John Warrick, and Jerry Jagger have made great progress on the crane already, continuing the work that Alex and Kenny Ciparis started. The crane now has a fresh coat of paint and its wheels have been securely mounted.
- Our club car, the John Bishop, had all its windows replaced. This work was performed skillfully by Dick Hague, who did a tremendous job on a tedious task, with a lot of assistance from Gene Bailey (with his Christmas-like spirit), George Cevera, Mike Shea, and others.
- Historic Ringoes Station, built in the 1880s, received two important upgrades this fall. First, a modern heating and air conditioning system was installed by an outside contractor. Then, a new point-of-sale computer system was installed. Pete Reimer did all the wiring, and Mike Shea set up the hardware and software. The station has not seen such significant improvements since it got its first electric lights nearly a century ago!
- Some progress was made on the CNJ baggage car, #420. Work was stalled a bit, however, because of additional activities at the trans-load facility where the 420 is located. Early this year, the baggage car will be moved to a new location that will be more favorable to our restoration efforts.

People

- Several members have become student engineers, including Daniel Vaccarella, Bill Doran, and Scott Kwiatkowski.

Photo by Scott Kwiatkowski



Members of the Trainmasters Group of the Somerset County 4H club fix benches in preparation for Railroad Days.

- Scott Lemley became a brakeman, and several of our trainmen became student brakemen. They include Jerry Jagger, Ken Brown, John Bissell, and George Cevera.
- Mike Shea became a conductor.
- Daniel Vaccarella got engaged and Mark Whitehead ("Whitey") got hitched.
- In the fall elections of the Trust's Board of Directors, only John Warwick's term was up, and he was reelected. Two additional board members, Chris Moyer and Scott Kwiatkowski, were also elected, expanding the board from five members to seven.
- An old Black River tradition returned this holiday season: the annual Christmas party! Daniel Vaccarella did a great job organizing the event and almost 70 people—including members and friends—joined in for an evening of nostalgic videos, great conversation, and good food at the Ringoes Fire House.
- Members of the Trainmasters Group of the Somerset County 4H club—about 20 kids, aged 5 to 16—came one weekend in June to help prepare for Railroad Days. The kids, assisted by various members of the Trust, particularly George Cevera and Bill Doran, replaced broken picnic bench seats and cleaned and painted the metal frames of all the benches. They also weeded, trimmed bushes, and planted flowers around the property. After all their hard work, they went for a train ride, and they were thrilled. One of the Trainmasters' founders, Jan Kuzma of the Big Little Railroad Shop, organized the visit. ♦



Photo by Dick Hague

George Cevera works on windows for the John Bishop.

Black River Railroad Historical Trust

TRAIN SHOW

Saturday, March 21, 2009
10:00 am to 3:00 pm

Flemington Elks Lodge
Route 31, Flemington, NJ

Adults - \$5.00 • Families - \$8.00
Kids under 12 free



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2008 Accomplishments
continued from page 6

with nary a bump in service. In addition to larger-than-normal train crews, this operation also required parking attendants, traffic control, and the ever-present Toad Lane flagman. Members eagerly stepped in and took on all these roles, and the big team effort paid off. We had excellent ridership numbers, and one weekend alone we moved more than 1,000 passengers. Many of those visitors enjoyed the ride to the corn maze on the haywagon car.

- After our PJX trains and our regular season closed at the end of October, we had only a few short weeks to get the coaches decorated, lights put up around the station, and Santa's village set up on the flat car in time for our Santa Claus and North Pole Express (NPX) trains, which began running Thanksgiving weekend. We had a huge number of riders on our NPX trains, with most trains sold out in advance, and all of them selling out before they left the station. Our passengers stayed warm throughout the holiday season thanks to Harold Ryan, who had performed maintenance on all the boilers on the coaches. Also, this year, for the first time, we ran two NPX trains each night instead of one. Because the Santa Claus trains ended their day in Flemington, and the NPX trains started in Flemington, Jim Hager provided a jitney to shuttle crews to and from Ringoes. This was the first time that Black River has ever used a jitney for passenger train operations. Of course, Santa was a busy man, and



Photo by Scott Kwiatkowski

Project lead Paul Nicholson poses with the old gal.

this year he had help from Mrs. Claus. What a wonderful couple.

- The Great Train Robbery in September brought in over \$500 in donations for the Trust. The weekend also brought a bit of adventure. A deer collided with one of the bandits' horses, causing the horse to rear up, dump its rider, and dart off. Fortunately, the rider (aka Steve, head-train-robbing-hombre), was not hurt and a fellow bandit rode after the horse, catching it quickly.
- After the excitement on Saturday, members and families attended our traditional picnic, which was well attended as always. What was unusual this year, however, was that a good crowd of people also stuck around on Sunday night to enjoy Russ Powell and John Bissel's barbeque. It had been a long time since the last Sunday night picnic at Black River, and it was great to see that old tradition revived.
- This year's Railroad Days weekend in June was also a success. The event went smoothly and was well attended, and for the first time in many years, we were able to give speeder rides, which were provided by the VRA. Steve Wiengart and his son Steve displayed their antique Farmall tractors on the flat car. The weekend was also special because we dedicated a plaque to members who have passed away (see p. 3).

Equipment

- The restoration of 60 is nearly complete (see p. 1).
- We took possession of the little Mack engine, which was built in October 1937.



Photo courtesy of PRRLLC

Steve Wiengart and his son Steve recreate a scene from Hunterdon county's agricultural past.

New Memorial Plaque Honors Past Volunteers of Black River

by Jerry Jagger

On Saturday, June 21, 2008, a Memorial Ceremony was held at Ringoes Station to dedicate a memorial plaque in remembrance of past volunteers of the Black River & Western Railroad. Trust President Michael Gil presided over the ceremony, and in his remarks, he noted that those of us who volunteer at the Black River & Western Railroad have grown to consider ourselves a family.

The names on the plaque were read by Michael Gil.

As each name was read, Jim Stevens rang the bell on steam engine #60. After the final name, Chris Moyer and his father George gave four short bursts from #60's whistle, calling for signals that will never be answered.

The idea for the memorial plaque was borne from the tragic death in September 2006 of one of our young and upcoming volunteers, Mark Stevens, Jim Stevens' son. Mark often volunteered at both the Black River and Bel-Del railroads. The plaque will be mounted in the Ringoes Station where it will serve as a remembrance of volunteers who have passed on. Additional names will be added as needed.

The members honored in this year's ceremony included:

- | | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| Lloyd Arkinstall | Bill Harvey | Edward Quick |
| E.R. "Doc" Ashton | Hugh Jenkins | Douglas Schmidt |
| John L. Bishop | Karl Jerolaman | Evelyn Schmidt |
| James N. Burenga | Charles Knapp | George Schmidt |
| Nicholas Burenga, Jr. | Russ LaRue | Johannes "Hans" Sieberer |
| Thomas Burenga | Helen Lesch | Donald D. Smith |
| Gerald Cruver | Harvey Lesch | Mark A. Stevens |
| Samuel Freeman | Gordon W. Lindsey | G. Nelson Tower, Jr. |
| Sheldon Fruchtmann | William Louge | William Whitehead |
| Winston Haufler | Bea Quick | Michael Wright |



Photo by Jerry Jagger

Pam and Jim Stevens stand by the memorial plaque that honors their late son Mark and other Black River volunteers.

The Grip is a publication of the BRRHT Public Relations Committee. If you have news or information you would like to see included in the next issue, please mail a hard copy to the BRRHT at:

BRRHT Attn: The Grip
P.O. Box 232
Ringoes, NJ 08551

Submissions also may be sent electronically to Scott Kwiatkowski at thegrip@brrht.org
For information about advertising in *The Grip*, contact Scott Kwiatkowski at thegrip@brrht.org.

For more information about the Black River Railroad Historical Trust, visit our website, brrht.org or email us at info@brrht.org.



We cannot tell a lie. George Washington fired 60.



After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, a WW II soldier fires up 60 to prepare for war.

George Washington Fires 60

Story and photos by Jerry Jagger

On May 3, 2008, the Black River Railroad Historical Trust not only started its operating season but also made its first appearance at the Spirit of the Jerseys State History Fair. This free annual event at Washington Crossing State Park had over 140 exhibitors from all over the tri-state area, and history re-enactors representing various periods interacted with visitors—and with our steam engine display.

Trust members Jerry Jagger, Marianne MacArthur, and Shauna Jagger set up and staffed the Trust's display. Visitors were offered a view of Black River photographs along with event schedules and applications for membership.

The most popular part of our tent, however, was our famous backhead display of 60's boiler. This simple activity was a huge hit with everyone. Children eagerly shoveled coal into the make-believe firebox, and many came back later to do it again. Various re-enactors—including George Washington and General Grant—also visited the tent and shoveled coal.

The History Fair was a successful event for the Trust, as many visitors showed interest in our activities. The day was also a lot of fun for the members who participated, and we are looking forward to our presence at this year's event on Saturday, May 2 (from 11 am to 5 pm). Any member who enjoys talking to people about the railroad and its history should consider getting involved. To do so, please contact Jerry Jagger. ♦



General Grant prepares 60 to send the troops into Richmond.



Every civil war soldier knew that success in battle depended on 60's readiness.

The Puzzler

By Scott Kwiatkowski

The tracks that the Black River & Western Railroad ride on today opened for business more than 150 years ago, at 10:30 am, on December 4, 1854, when the first train rolled north from Lambertville en route to Flemington.

What was the name of that first railroad?

This will be easy for those who have been around that long! For the rest of you, here's a hint: Think of how railroads were first named—by towns and the railroad's predominant direction of travel.

As always, find the answers to the Puzzler online. Go to the BRRHT home page (brrht.org) and look for the *Puzzler* link.

Recap of the last puzzler:

The Question: In the last week of January 1909, a mysterious New Jersey native was seen in the Lambertville area. Who was it?

Bonus question: In reference to the above question, what was significant about one of the mile posts on the Flemington branch of the Bel-Del, according to the track map of the 1800s?

Hint: This was a 12-mile long branch.

* * * * *

The answer: The Jersey Devil.

Answer to the bonus question: On the track map, mile post 6 is represented as 666.

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