

# The Railyard Local

Volume 8, Issue 6

-The Monthly Newsletter of the Danbury Railway Museum-

August 2009

## Comcast Tapes DRM for On-Air Viewing

By Steve Gould

Three members of the Comcast Video Support Team visited the Museum on July 9, 2009 to tape a segment about DRM. Producer Ken Fay said the segment possibly will air Tuesday, September 8<sup>th</sup>, then be available for viewing later from On-Demand on Comcast.

A number of DRM volunteers were interviewed including President Ira Pollack, Vice President Wade Roese, Secretary Steve Gould, Director John O'Hern, Wooden Caboose Project Manager Gerry Herrmann, Stationmaster Dave Lowry, and Director Peter McLachlan. The interviews were taped at various locations in the yard or in the station building. Gerry appeared in front of the NYC&HRR caboose,



Cameras were rolling during Comcast's interview with DRM Vice-President Wade Roese.

Peter was in the Museum Library, and Dave was at his post at the Front Desk. Ira was taped in front of the RS1, while Wade had the Sperry Rail Detector Car in the background. John appeared in front of an ex-Reading coach, and Steve was inside the RPO. All of this was meant to give the viewer a more complete picture of the Museum. Questions were asked about why each volunteered, why was it important, and what makes DRM such a unique museum. Other questions centered on display pieces and their restoration.

*Continued on Page 3*

## In This Issue

- ~ Ten Years Ago - Page 2
- ~ DRM Receives Amherst Grant - Page 3
- ~ DRM Express Track - Page 4
- ~ Views of Danbury Freight House - Page 6
- Plus . . . New Members and New Hours

## Antique Wheels of All Kinds

The DRM will be the site of an exciting array of antique vehicles on Saturday, September 19<sup>th</sup> from 10-5pm. We anticipate a variety of vintage autos, trucks, military vehicles, hot rods, and fire trucks joining our display of railroad equipment for the day. Imagine all this for the regular admission cost of \$6 for adults, \$5 for senior citizens, \$4 for children 3-12 (under 3 years old free)! Train rides will be \$3 additional per ticket. Our website [www.danburyrail.org](http://www.danburyrail.org) also has information.

If you are interested in attending this event with a vintage and/or special vehicle, please contact Ira Pollack at the Museum (203) 778-8337 as soon as possible to make arrangements.

This is another one of the events we have scheduled in an effort to attract guests who otherwise might not make the effort to come to our Museum, and also to provide variety for our regular fans.

## DRM's 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

### Friday, September 18<sup>th</sup> dinner celebration

There still is time if you hurry to purchase tickets for this special occasion to be held at Two Steps Restaurant on Ives Street in Danbury. The festivities will begin at **6:30pm** with a buffet dinner, followed by an entertaining slide presentation by Peter McLachlan, and awarding of door prizes. Information also is posted on our website [www.danburyrail.org](http://www.danburyrail.org).

Tickets are \$35 per person and may be obtained in person at the Museum, by mailing a check, or by calling the Museum with a credit card handy. You also may call Sue Teer at 203-792-1981. If purchasing by mail, please make the check out to Danbury Railway Museum, indicate it is for the dinner tickets, and mail it to S. Teer, Danbury Railway Museum, P.O. Box 90, Danbury, CT 06813. Be sure to include your return address and telephone number with the order.

Join us for what promises to be a wonderful evening!

---

## New Members

We are delighted to welcome our new members this month. All members, as well as the general public, are welcome to attend the weekly meetings and free programs held Wednesdays, 7:30pm, at the Museum, 120 White Street, Danbury. We invite all members to become involved in Museum activities as soon as possible!

Jonathan Adams  
Chuck Heidorn  
A. Abrahamsen  
A. Trageser  
Stephen Tompds  
Lynn Billings  
George E. Pierce  
Bryan Fairbanks

Yorktown Heights, NY  
Gardner, MA  
Wilton, CT  
North Salem, NY  
New York, NY  
Patterson, NY  
Canton, GA  
Poughquag, NY

---

## Passing of Two Volunteers

Dear Members,

I regret to tell you that we have lost two outstanding volunteers recently.

For the past several years Desmond McCann spent most of his time volunteering at the Front Desk and giving tours of the railyard. He will be missed by our staff.

Howard Peatfield, one of our original members also passed away after a long illness. From the early days on he continued to be a strong supporter of our Museum, and always was around to help during our shows and fan trips.

These two members will be sorely missed by me and our Museum membership. My condolences go out to both families.

---

## John Helmstetter Farm Fund

We have received word by way of Dan Gallo, Sr. that John Helmstetter of Cumberland, Maryland lost his barn, livestock, equipment, and dog, as well as suffered injury to himself, as a result of a barn fire. For many years Mr. Helmstetter has generously allowed organized groups of railfans to photograph the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad from his property. In addition, he has enhanced the photo opportunities on Helmstetter Curve by allowing, or himself doing, tree and brush removal on his premises to eliminate obstructions.

If you wish to contribute to the Helmstetter Farm Fund to assist John Helmstetter, a variety of ways are listed on its website: [www.helmstetterfarm.org](http://www.helmstetterfarm.org).

In addition, Dan Gallo has made an offer to those proving a contribution of at least \$25. He can be contacted at [danbargal@verizon.net](mailto:danbargal@verizon.net)

---

## Ten Years Ago

By Stan Madyda

"A Day Out With Thomas" headlined the August 1999 issue of "Danbury Departures." The three day event took place over three very hot and humid days. But the heat did not stop over 10,000 people from attending. Close to 100 Museum members volunteered their time in performing numerous tasks involved with the event. Train crews, car hosts, gift shop personnel, food service, guides, clean up and security were just some of the areas that needed to be covered.

The biggest attraction was, of course, Thomas. Long lines formed so that children could have their photo taken next to the engine. The wait was long sometimes, complicated by the fact that the Thomas trips in the yard were on a scheduled timetable. The speeder ride line also was long. Two motorized speeders were in service for the entire three days giving numerous rides to our guests. A third hand powered car was on display with demonstrations given. This



car is currently located in the station. To enhance the day a few small amusement park rides were on hand along with a petting zoo. Three gift shops were open selling Thomas related items. All in all the event was very successful for the DRM.

The Tonawanda Valley also was in the news because a small movie company was interested in using the car for a film. The car was still in the state we received it and needed much clean up. The film company supplied people who cleaned, painted and polished the inside of the car.

A grant was received from the Meserve Fund for the purchase of equipment to be used for an ongoing Oral History project. The idea plan was to interview and videotape current and retired railroaders as well as family members of deceased railroaders. Then the material could be compiled into a written form.

*Continued on Page 3*

## DRM Receives Amherst Grant

The Danbury Railway Museum is very grateful to the Amherst Railway Society for its continued support of our restoration efforts. Once again this organization has awarded us with a grant toward one of our restorations. These funds have been a great help, and we are very appreciative!

Just as in previous years, our Grants Committee (Steve Gould and Mike Salata) submitted an application to the Amherst Society for a particular project. This year it was a request for funds to help restore the NYC Tonawanda Valley Observation Lounge Car. The Museum has received a generous grant of \$2000. This money will be used for the restoration and stabilization of the car's exterior, including application of epoxy to the roof.

The **Amherst Railway Society** raises funds for grants such as this by using proceeds from its huge **Railroad Hobby Show**, which is held annually at "Big E" in West Springfield, MA. the last full weekend in January. For many railroad fans the trip to this event has become almost a pilgrimage, so the weekend of **January 30-31, 2010** is already blocked out on their calendars for next year. Just think - while you are having a fantastic time at the show, you also are supporting railroading through their wonderful organization!

## Hours Change for the Season

Please make note:

**Beginning after Labor Day and continuing until Memorial Day, the Museum will be open:  
Wednesday - Saturday 10-4pm  
Sunday 12-4pm**

### *Ten Years Ago, Continued from Page 2*

Work needed to prepare the 1455's movement to Danbury was complete and arrangements were in progress for CSX to move the engine from Massachusetts.

A track project in the yard was completed with Tracks 18, 20 and 22 connected to the rest of the yard and a run-around track installed on 24 and 26. These tracks located closest to the station play an important part of today's Railyard Local and for the display of some of our equipment. The work was paid for by the state, and an outside contractor was used.

Our Rutland flat car arrived in the yard via a large flat bed tow truck from the Green Mountain Railroad located in Bellows Falls, VT. At the time, it appeared several more pieces of equipment would be coming from Vermont.

## *Comcast Tapes DRM for On-Air Viewing,*

*Continued from Page 1*

In addition to the interviews, the taping crew boarded the Rail Yard Local for a ride out to the turntable. They taped "runbys" of the train as well as the operating turntable. Visitors who were present at the Museum that day got a free train ride and a chance to be on TV!

Ken Fay said viewers subscribing to Comcast cable would be able to see it by clicking On Demand, then "Get Local" on the menu, followed by "Comcast Town".



Above, Comcast taping at the turntable. Below, Gerry Herrmann discussing the caboose. Bottom, John O'Hern in front of an ex-Reading coach. Photos by Steve Gould.



# DRM Express Track

By Ira Pollack, President

Hope you are having a good summer season.

I would like to fill you in on some of the things going on in the yard. We have had several good weekends of working on stabilizing the turntable. Our yard crew has replaced several of the rotten boards on the deck and will do



more shortly. We also have been cleaning off the base of the bridge girder of all the sand and grime that has accumulated there, causing corrosion in several areas. Our plan is to power wash this area, then apply a rust converting product to prevent further deterioration of this collect-all point. I am hoping to paint the bridge girder before fall arrives, and also paint the upper decking. All this is a temporary fix for the turntable. I am trying to buy us time in saving this artifact with the limited funding available to us at this time. I just wish we could have everyone available at one time to work on this project. Just imagine having 30 people dedicated to this, all working together for one goal! There are many hours of work required to even scratch the surface of this project, but to me this is one of our most important assets of the Museum, and is in dire need of attention. I would like to list my plan for stabilization at this point in time. Not all of these items will happen this year, but the more people who can show up on Saturdays, the more work can be done.

1) Clean and scrape the dirt accumulations off the base of the bridge girder



- 2) Power wash the girder of all remaining residue
- 3) Apply rust converter with brush and rollers
- 4) Paint girder with a Rustoleum type of anti-rust paint
- 5) Clean the loose concrete debris and weeds out of the pit bottom

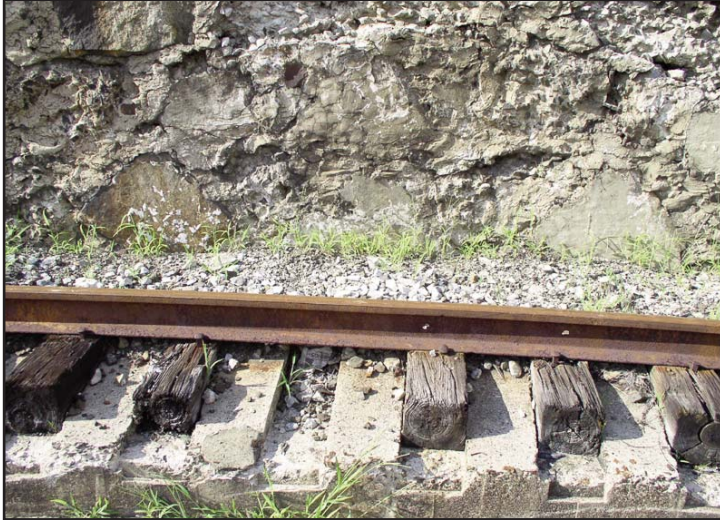


**4**

1) Clean and scrape the dirt accumulations off the base of the bridge girder

Continued on Page 5

6) Begin tie replacement of the ring rail



7) Stabilize the wooden end beam to prevent further



rotting. These are but a few of the projects ahead of us which will just buy ourselves time.

Eventually we must replace the operator booth's floor, the outrigger bearings, and the deck timbers which support the rails. The concrete walls need

to be repoured. We volunteers can do some of the



work, but some obviously will be contracted out. It certainly is a major project for us, but well worth the effort.

In other news, trackwork continues at the turntable lead switch, with areas just west of the switch on Track 42. We are in the process of replacing about 20 ties in this area, and regauging rail where necessary. We have found that our SW8 and failing ties



are a bad combination for operation. The locomotive is very inflexible, literally, with these areas of our yard, and tends to make its own path when traversing through them, even if it is on the ground. Track maintenance is a given at the DRM. It is an ongoing project, or maybe a curse. Unfortunately it must be done on a regular basis.

As usual there is much going on at the DRM. There are probably twenty things happening all at the same time. I have been trying to keep the cleanup projects moving along: recycling oil that has accumulated through our train service or removing the rotted ties that seem to appear overnight. There does not seem to be any end to it but I am slowly making progress. We must maintain a clean and safe environment for both our volunteers and our guests at all times. There also are plans coming together for an antique vehicle show on September 19th. I am excited by the hopes of trying a new event that may attract different people to our facility. We must always try new ideas to attract these people.

I hope you can help out with some of the things I have talked about this month. The Museum needs your help, now, more than ever!

# Views of Danbury Freight House, Inside and Out

By Peter McLachlan, former New Haven engineer

Danbury freight house was built around 1918. Although it was in sound condition, it was bulldozed about 20 years ago by Conrail to get it off the tax rolls. The trailers for Metro-North stand where the freight house was located. All that remains are two artifacts, braces which supported the overhang of the freight house.

Toward the end of its time, in its main two-story part, there was a huge office downstairs and one office for the freight agent. There were bathroom facilities downstairs. Upstairs were an engine and crew dispatcher's office, and the trainmaster's office. There was a small main room off of these offices where the crews reported. Off of this room were the bathroom and showers, and again, off this room was a bunk room that could accommodate four crew members. The one-story end of the freight house contained about six separate rooms, each the width of the building, with doors on both sides for transporting freight from rail to truck, and truck to rail. Along the length of the building on the truck side was a small hallway that led down to all of them. It was LCL -



Top photo, courtesy of the DRM Library, shows the freight house in the PennCentral era. Photographer unknown. The station was to the left and the other side of the New Haven tracks. The white building at the left of the photo is Leahey's, which is still there. This view is from the #18 platform, showing the side of the one-story section of the freight house that was accessed by trucks. Photo below, from today, shows part of the platform which formerly was used by Railway Express.



“less than a carload”. Most of the units were used for transloads, and a couple were rented for the year. Bulk freight meant that the entire car and load were delivered intact to the location. If a freight load needed to be unloaded directly to a truck, you could use Track 18, 34, 36, and rarely 42. An example of this is the platform where the steam locomotive is today. The platform where the boxcars are located was the platform for Railway Express, which was independent.

Continued on Page 7



Photo above is a view of the one-story portion of the freight house in the PennCentral era. Photographer unknown. This shows the track side where railroad freight cars could pull up for loading or unloading freight. The other side not shown here was our Track 18 platform where trucks could pull up. Danbury Station is in the background. Top right photo is of our display signage for the freight house artifacts which unfortunately are all that remain of this structure. Photo at right shows the casting and supports for the overhang which are evident in the historic photo supplied by the DRM Library. These artifacts are located on the Track 18 platform in our railyard.





PO Box 90, DANBURY, CT 06813

NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
DANBURY, CT  
PERMIT NO. 569

## MUSEUM CALENDAR

Aug	20(7:00pm)	Board Meeting - Open to Members
Aug	26(7:30pm)	Slides; B&M, D&H - Gary Gurske
Sept	2(7:30pm)	Slides; NYC 20th Century - Carl Liba
Sept	9(7:30pm)	Topic TBA - Stan Madyda
Sept	16(7:30pm)	Video; Conrail; B&A - Gary Gurske
Sept	17(7:00pm)	Board Meeting - Open to Members
Sept	23(7:30pm)	Topic TBA - Ed Blackman

**Museum hours: Monday-Saturday 10-5pm; Sunday 12-5pm**  
**AFTER LABOR DAY: Wed-Sat 10-4pm; Sun 12-4pm**  
See the newsletter in color at [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@aol.com](mailto:drmmembers@aol.com)

