

# The Railyard Local

Celebrating 20 Years!

Volume 13, Issue 4

The Newsletter of the Danbury Railway Museum 1994 - 2014

June - July 2014

## Danbury Frequent Visitor - The Stone Train

By Steve Gould; Photos by Bob Kessler

Danbury Railway Museum members who live in the Danbury area are cognizant of a visitor to the city several days of the week from April to November. It's the "stone train" of trap rock of up to 40 hoppers, brought into town by the Providence & Worcester Railroad using the tracks of Metro-North and Housatonic Railroads. The trap rock is delivered to the Tilcon asphalt plant near Federal Road in Danbury. It usually arrives very late at night several nights a week (it used to be more frequent when the train used the now-embargoed Maybrook Line from Devon Junction), but the nocturnal movements are still witnessed from time to time by hearty DRM members. The terminating operations are well known, but how many have checked out the origin of the stone train?



Picking up the stone train at Tilcon quarry in Durham, CT.

In late May, DRM member Bob Kessler visited me for a few days as he was scheduled to do a slide presentation at the Museum on "Railroads of the Deep South". During the day of the night of the show, Bob and I usually do some railfanning and this day was no different. We had planned to check out any activity in Middletown, CT and then move on to Willimantic, CT. It was not long before we decided that Willimantic would have to wait for another day; the scanner we brought with us indicated some activity in the Middletown area. Our first surprise of the day was to see that the previously open railroad

*Continued on Page 3*

### In This Issue:

~ Ten Years Ago - Page 2

~ Words from Our President - Page 4

~ National Train Day at the DRM - Page 7

Plus . . . New Members & Upcoming Events

## Danbury Railway Museum 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner!

Yes, we have reached the goal of 20 years in 2014 and are celebrating with a buffet dinner on July 18<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 p.m., at Armando's Restaurant, 47 Stony Hill Road, (I-84 exit 8 heading East) in Bethel. The price is \$35 per person and you can reserve by July 12<sup>th</sup> by sending your check (made out to Danbury Railway Museum) to: Sue Teer, Danbury Railway Museum, P.O. Box 90, Danbury, CT 06813. You can also reserve at the Museum front desk in person, or by telephone with a credit card.

There will also be a speaker, which will be announced soon. This promises to be a fun evening and we hope to see our members come out to celebrate this milestone in our history!

## DRM at New Haven Union Station

Can you identify where this photo was taken by Steve Gould? Oh well, the headline gives it away.

Steve was picking up DRM member Bob Kessler, who was coming up from Virginia via Amtrak to do a slide presentation at the Museum on May 28<sup>th</sup>, and he found this table not far from the Amtrak information office



at Union Station. There are two racks of Shore Line East timetables but in the middle are DRM folders and membership forms.

You don't get publicity like that very often!

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## 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!

**Have you noticed?** The address label on each newsletter indicates the expiration date of your membership in the upper right-hand corner (recent renewals may not have the new date on the label). Life members do not have an expiration date.

Windham Vance	Southington, CT
Lesly Cantono	Sandy Hook CT
Michael Casadevall	New York, NY
Pa & De Angelo	Westport, CT
Avril Stephens	Danbury, CT
Owen Anderson	Sunnyside, NY

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## Upcoming Events at the DRM

### June 28<sup>th</sup> - First Responders Day

Free train rides for first responders and their families.

### July 19<sup>th</sup> - Owney, the Railway Post Office Dog Day

History, stories and children's activities to honor Owney, the famous Railway Post Office dog.

### August 2<sup>nd</sup> - Danbury Railway Day & Members Picnic

Special celebration with special activities! Guided tours of the *Tonawanda Valley* observation car, which is currently undergoing restoration, Budd rail diesel car, #1455 steam engine, Railway Post Office car and the NYC & HRR wooden caboose will be available. Other things going on will be an operating forge, open equipment exhibits, operating model train layouts and kids activities. The Library will be having a 1/2-off used book sale and some recently donated HO rolling stock will also be for sale.

After the day's festivities, members can take a ride on our engine (perhaps even drive) before the picnic. Then the Museum will hold a members-only picnic where there'll be plenty of great food. A \$5 donation is requested at the picnic. If you are planning to attend, please let us know by calling the Station (203-778-8337) by July 26<sup>th</sup> to let us know how many will be coming and if you can bring a salad or dessert.

## Ten Years Ago

By Stan Madyda

The Museum celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> Year Anniversary with a dinner at the Stony Hill Inn in Bethel. State Senator David Cappiello helped to get the festivities started and the evening was concluded with a slide presentation by Jack Swanberg.

On May 1<sup>st</sup>, Metro-North held its Rail Rodeo in Danbury. This was a competition held for Metro-North employees, but was not open to the public. However, some of the rodeo could be seen from the Museum's grounds.

Plans were underway to open an exhibit on Sperry Rail after we received car #135 as a donation. Our Sperry Rail Car travelled throughout the United States testing for rail defects. We received the car in almost complete condition

The June 2004 newsletter made mention that the first newsletter of the DRM was published in June 1994. Written by President L. Peter Cornwall, it contained his welcome letter:

WHO WE ARE:

*The Danbury Railway Museum, incorporated on March 8<sup>th</sup>, 1994 is off to a good start. That is WE are off to a good start. As members, you and I and all others who have joined with us so far, are the most important part of the DRM. We are starting an interesting journey together - we'll have a real sense of accomplishment and some good times along the way. Sooner or later, we'll meet each other in our "yard office," for now at 16 Ives Street or perhaps in the waiting room of the temporary Metro-North station where charter member Ed Blackman holds sway behind the wicket from 0515 to 1415 weekdays. Or perhaps we'll meet aboard a special bus trip to Steamtown and Strasburg this summer.*

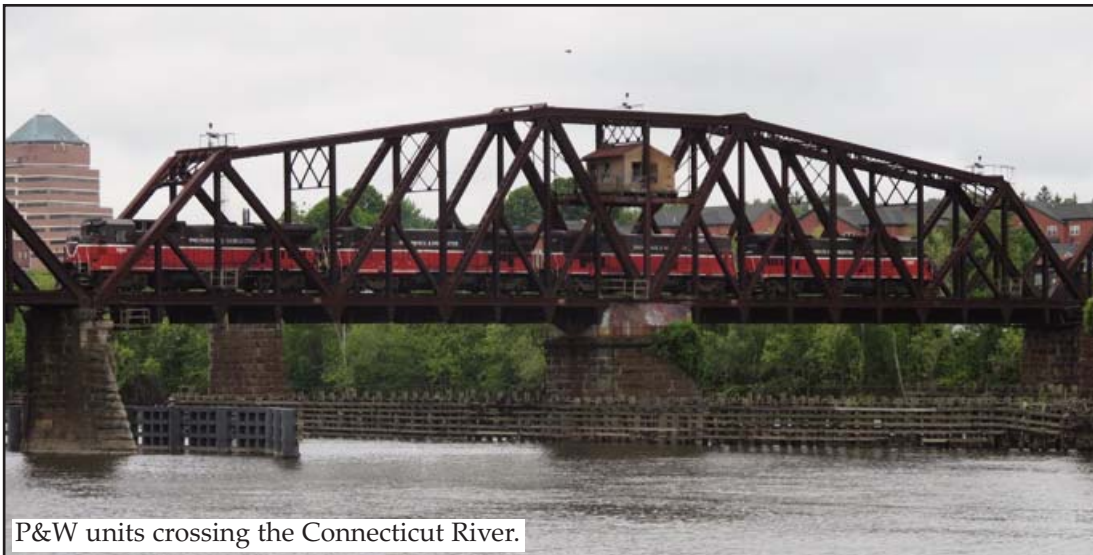
*Our charter describes us as an educational organization, and the prime mission of a museum is to show and tell others - in our case, about railroads, long past, mid-century and present day and what they have done, and can do, for us. I started with the railroads, and have been watching them from the sidelines for a lot of years, yet I learn something new and fascinating about the art of railroading every time I talk to a railroader or a DRM member close to the subject. You will too!*

*Along with Chairman Hal Meeker, Vice President Peter McLachlan and other charter members, I extend to you a warm welcome on board!*

*(signed) Peter Cornwall*



*Danbury Frequent Visitor - The Stone Train, Continued from Page 1*



P&W units crossing the Connecticut River.

swing bridge over the Connecticut River was now closed and ready for rail traffic. This was shortly followed by finding four GE P&W units in town. A prior visit to an industrial park across the river from Middletown found a transformer that had been off-loaded from an eight-axle depressed center flatcar on to a twelve-axle flatbed truck trailer. Putting two and two together, we assumed the bridge was

closed so the P&W could pick up the empty flat car and we were right. We watched the units cross the bridge, picking up the flat car, and return across the river. We learned that this was only the second time in two years (the first was a few days previous to deliver the transformer) that the bridge had been used by a train. We also learned from the P&W crew that their next move was down to Durham to pick up forty hoppers of the stone train from the Tilcon quarry there. We asked ourselves, "does it get any better than that?"

The P&W had the flat car "sandwiched" with two units on each end. We paced the train from Middletown to Durham and caught it at five locations on the way to Durham; with ten mph track, it was easy to keep ahead. At Durham, the crew picked up a leased CEFX SD40. The rear two units uncoupled from



Arriving at an industrial park to pick up a flat car.

the flat car and went into the quarry to pick up the stone train consist. As it slowly came out of the quarry yard, we noticed that a number of the hoppers used were formerly from the Florida East Coast Railway. In about a half an hour from arrival at the quarry, the train was ready to depart for Cedar Hill Yard in New Haven. Later, it



Departing the quarry site in Durham, CT.

would move on to Danbury that night. We grabbed video and stills of the train departing and raced to East Wallingford, CT to get another shot. I had my tripod and video camera set up to catch the train on an embankment crossing a road on a one-lane overpass. Just before the train's arrival, a truck from behind us moved up and blocked the shot, so I moved forward. As the train appeared, a car stopped in front of the overpass to watch the train. Normally cool, calm and collected Bob became agitated, hot and far from collected, and let fly with some not-for-prime-time words of wisdom. The camera rolled anyway and the video turned out just fine, albeit with some recorded expletive commentary!

We were unable to catch the train again and decided to break off the chase. Shortly it was

*Continued on Page 5*



# Words from Our President

Something of interest to report this issue, but a little different. On Tuesday nights a group of us meet to work on building and maintaining various exhibits within the Museum. Director and Superintendent, Jeff VanWagenen decided Marty Grossman and yours truly should take a ride in the cab of a P&W stone train consist. Marty and I did, but Jeff didn't. However, he picked us up at the end of the trip in Wilton to return us to the DRM (more information in this issue of the newsletter).

Late May and early June the DRM hosted over 500 third-graders, teachers and parents from eight local Danbury elementary schools. The classes visited the DRM after a morning visit at the Danbury Historical Museum. Some classes walked over while others rode in buses, but all arrived in good spirits and filled with enthusiasm. At our Museum, a short safety presentation on "Operation Lifesaver" was followed by a train ride on the Railyard Local, a spin on our turntable or a visit to our Railway Post Office car and then back to the Station. A gift of a pencil and discount coupon rounded out the visit. Some good weather and some not so good didn't dampen the kids' enthusiasm. Our second year cooperating with the Danbury Historical Museum in offering this program seems to be a success.



P&W units tied up for the night outside the Station.

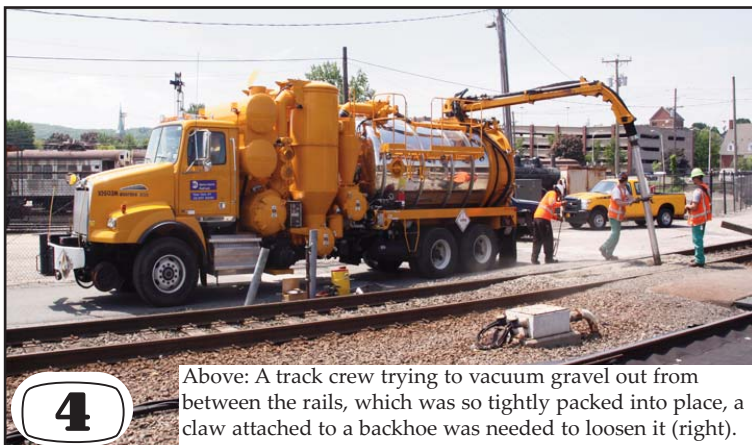


Kids watching an Operation Lifesaver safety video.



Kids board the Railyard Local.

After an extended period of time that our pedestrian crossing into the yard has been a gravel walkway which easily eroded and had to be periodically maintained by the very busy Metro-North track crews, the crossing has had newly supplied rubber-style road pads installed! These pads will substantially enhance and improve the safety of our private crossing. Thanks and kudos to our Metro-North neighbors!



4

Above: A track crew trying to vacuum gravel out from between the rails, which was so tightly packed into place, a claw attached to a backhoe was needed to loosen it (right).



Continued on Page 6





time to head to Danbury. At the Museum that night, President Wade Roesse informed Bob and I that he and DRM member Marty Grossman had got permission to go for a cab ride on the stone train when it left town the following night with empty hoppers to take back to the quarry.

When I got to the Museum Thursday morning for my normal "tour of duty", lo and behold, there were the four units Bob and I chased the previous day, laying over on the Housatonic tracks just east of the Museum. Wade and Marty would be riding in one of these units that night. They climbed up into the cab of B39-8E #3904 to start their adventure. They headed to the

Above: Crossing a small overpass in East Wallingford, CT enroute to Cedar Hill Yard in New Haven.  
Left: Crossing the Connecticut River once more.

Tilcon plant east of the Museum where the four units split apart so that they could "sandwich" the forty empty hoppers between them. Then they headed around the loop and south on Metro-North's Danbury Branch. This was Wade's first ride on the Danbury Branch and what an inauguration! DRM Superintendent Jeff VanWagenen had driven down US 7 to Wilton where Wade and Marty would get off. It was a fascinat-



ing ride and Wade said he never knew there were so many trestles. They also passed through a crossing at grade for a road to nowhere! It seems that there were plans for a condo development that involved crossing the Branch and the developer had to pay for installation of crossing lights and gates. The condos never came, but the lights and gates are there, operating to this day.

So there you are – stone train stories from beginning to end!



Steve taking a shot of the stone train in Durham, CT.





## Words from Our President, *Continued from Page 4*



Left:  
Vacuuming  
out the loos-  
ened gravel.  
Right:  
Moving a  
rubber pad  
into place.  
Below left:  
The complet-  
ed pedestri-  
an crossing  
with rubber  
pads outside  
of the  
Station.



As many people living around the Danbury area are aware, work on the many Metro-North trackage road crossings are being worked upon. New drainage, ballast, ties, tie plates, clips, etc. are being installed under a multi-million dollar replacement program to rework a marginally functioning signaling system caused by drainage problems affecting correct signal operations and sporadic crossing protection operations. Road crossing closures, which of course aggravates drivers, reduced rail service because track is temporarily removed from service, aggravating commuters, and the need for buses to complete commutes, also disdaining to travelers, are



Stacked plastic composite ties.



Composite ties and tie plates lined up with holes drilled out.

only some of the frustrations impacting the project. On the construction side of the project, all is not great either. Extraordinary efforts by CDOT, Metro-North, Waters Construction and Rail Construction Corporation (most recently replaced by RailWorks of New Jersey) have also had some issues with the track having the proper gauge, which was possibly caused by the incorporation of newly developed composite (plastic) ties. The solution...yup...back to good-ole' fashioned wood ties. Work continues and it seems that progress is moving right along and ahead of schedule. Everyone involved are busting their rear-ends with long hours and weekend work



to bring this work to fruition. So why present this information? Thanks to all the aforementioned enti-  
ties, the Danbury Railway Museum has been the recipient of discarded gravel/fill, used *Continued on Page 7*





Top left: Composite ties with installed tie plates lined up. Above: A RailWorks crew drills holes into wooden ties. Left: A completed section of panel track using wooden ties with the hole boring and rail gauge machine resting on top.

railroad ties and other discarded materials which are obviously of great use to us. As an aside, the DRM yard has been utilized as a staging site for much of the preparation and assembly work, thus affording us the opportunity to get an education about the ups, downs and pitfalls of trackwork and rail construction in general.

On behalf of the Danbury Railway Museum, Wade W. Roese

## National Train Day at the Danbury Railway Museum

By Steve Gould, Secretary

May 10<sup>th</sup> was National Train Day throughout the USA. The DRM had its own celebration with free train rides all day for everyone who purchased an admission ticket. The Rail Yard Local consist was the 44-tonner and two ex-Reading coaches. Jose' Alves and Wade Roese hooked-up the PA system for both coaches so that Steve Gould could give riders a short talk on what National Train Day was all about.

National Train Day was established by Amtrak in 2011 to honor their 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary as well as to celebrate the driving of the golden spike at Promontory Point in Utah in 1869. Since it was Amtrak's day, Steve gave an overview on the formation of Amtrak in 1971 up to present day. He spoke about how Amtrak got its name: *American Travel by Track*. He mentioned that Amtrak's ridership its first full year of operation was 16 million passengers and in Fiscal Year 2013, that number stood at 31.6 million. Comparing Amtrak with domestic airlines, they would be ranked number six in passengers carried. They own the New York to Washington market share with three times as many passengers handled vs. airlines. And between New York and Boston, Amtrak carries more than all airlines combined.

The day was a moderate success and it was hoped guests learned something about Amtrak that they had not heard before.



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## MUSEUM CALENDAR

June	25(7:30pm)	Battle for Donner Pass - Ron Smith
July	2(7:30pm)	Red, White & Blue Trains - Dan Foley
July	9(7:30pm)	To Be Announced
July	16(7:30pm)	To Be Announced
July	17(7:00pm)	Board Meeting - Open to Members
July	23(7:30pm)	To Be Announced
July	30(7:30pm)	To Be Announced
August	6(7:30pm)	To Be Announced
August	13(7:30pm)	York Railway Museum - John Barton
August	20(7:30pm)	To Be Announced

**Summer Museum hours: Mon-Sat 10-5; Sun 12-5**

See the newsletter in color at [www.danburyrail.org](http://www.danburyrail.org)!



### Contact Information

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Attention: Newsletter

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### **Change of Address**

If you move, please send your change of address to:

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