



The Semaphore

Newsletter of the Rochester NY Chapter, NRHS
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January 2005
Volume 47, No. 5

Panoramic View of the "Big Dig"



Program for Jan. 20:

1973 NRHS Convention

by **Bob Mader**

Bob Mader attended the New Orleans Annual Convention of the National Historical Railway Society in 1973. He will be showing a Super-8 film, with his narration, as well as some slides of this event 22 years ago.

Future Programs

February 17: *Maintenance of Way* by Richard Wagner

March 17: Members' slide night

April 21: *Chinese Steam #3* by Duncan Richards

May 19 *Lehigh Valley 16 mm movies* by Ken Kramer.

June, July & August: Operations at the Museum.

Sept. 15: *American Orient Ltd.* by Bob Achilles

(These Programs are subject to change.)

Chapter Library

11 May Street, Webster (by OMID Tracks)

Hours: 2 to 5 PM

Sunday, January 23

Library Phone: 872-4641

This is a recent panoramic view north of the Restoration Building documenting the construction equipment being used in the "BIG DIG". This area should soon see the installation of two tracks that lead into the building. The removed dirt is hauled to the south of the building so that the track with the two cars and EK #9 can be extended southward. Chris Hauf took several photos and 'stitched' them together via computer to provide this view.



[Chris Hauf photo]

Depot is now WARMER

Al Pastorell constructed and installed new storm windows for the Agent's Office at the Depot, replacing the existing screens. Besides being warmer, more light enters the Office.

Thanks, Al!

Winter Caboose Campout

Saturday night, February 12th

by Dale Hartnett

The Annual Caboose Campout will be held at the Museum commencing Saturday, Feb. 12, 2005. This is always a fun event for everybody involved. We'll start with a steak dinner early Saturday evening, continue with railroad videos until we can't take it any more, sleep overnight in the Museum's caboose fleet and awake to a hearty breakfast. We promise that you won't go away hungry!

If you have never attended a winter sleepover, you should mark your calendar and reserve your place now. Cost is \$20 per person. For reservations, contact Dale Hartnett at 585/243-0139.

Your returnable cans can help Steam Fund

by Dale Hartnett

Have the empty cans piled up at your house after the holidays? You can help turn returnable cans into cash for the Steam Fund by donating them to the Chapter any time. There is a receptacle in the Baggage Room at the Museum

Remember to keep us in mind for the empties following your NFL Playoff and Super Bowl parties, as well!

2005 Chapter Rail Tours Announced

Jim East is now taking reservations for the Chapter's sponsored Rail Trip Tours for 2005. These trips are very popular and quickly sell out to previous patrons.

The Spring Tour:

Canadian Spring Adventure to Quebec City and Montreal by Rail; May 30 (5 days, 4 nights)

Leave Rochester Amtrak station with coach travel to Toronto's Union Station for boarding VIA Train #60, board another train in Montreal for continuing to Quebec. Hotel is Quebec Hilton, an AAA 4 diamond rating. Full day in Quebec with a 90-minute harbor cruise.

On Saturday, leave for Montreal for two nights at Queen Elizabeth (a Fairmont Hotel rated 4 diamonds by AAA) at Central Station. Sunday is a free day for exploring the city and shops.

On Monday, board Amtrak train #68 for traveling the east coast most scenic train ride along the shores of Lake Champlain into Albany, then returning to Rochester on the *Lake Shore Limited*.

Double occupancy: \$710, Triple occupancy: \$650 per person

The Fall Foliage Tour:

Fall Foliage Tour by Rail: Boston, Portland and the Maine Coast; Oct. 6 - Oct. 10 (5 days, 4 nights)

On Thursday morning, depart Rochester Amtrak Station on Amtrak #449 to Boston. One night at Comfort Inn with breakfast.

On Friday, leave hotel for Boston's North Station for Portland, Maine. Three nights at Double Tree Inn, with breakfast; rest of time is free.

Saturday, depart hotel by motor coach for trip to Freeport Maine and the L.L. Bean Company for shopping; returning for exploration of waterfront area.

Sunday, depart hotel for Kennebunkport tour and visit of Trolley Museum and ride for the group. In afternoon, island cruise in Portland Bay and dinner on a private island (dinner included).

Monday, leave hotel for return to Rochester, via Boston, arriving at 10:10 PM.

The Pre-Christmas Tours:

Dec. 1 - Dec. 3 (Thursday-Saturday)

Hotel Metro (near Macy's and Empire State Building), dinner at Owen O'Reilly's Restaurant, Orchestras seats at the Christmas Show at Radio City Music Hall featuring the Rockettes. A free day for shopping option.

Dec. 9 - Dec. 12 (Friday-Monday)

Same as above, except three nights at about a \$90 extra. The 2004 NYC trips prices were from \$460 to \$640 per person. Final cost can only be estimated at this time, but expected to be about 5% higher.

If interested in any of these trips, make reservations with Jim East before Wednesday, January 12 or after February 12, 2005. His phone is 585-377-5389.

Chapter Related WebSites

This site, www.rochnrhs.org, has Chapter news, images of *The Semaphore* since 2001, a sampling of historical photographs in our collection, among other interesting items.

www.wagplow.org gives you the latest accomplishment on renovating the Maine Central (WAG) snow plow.

The Fourth installment on the Telegraph, by Chris Hausler, appears on Page 5.

Contributors to this issue

Harold Crouch, Janet Dittmer, Dale Hartnett, Chris Hauf, Chris Hasuler, Jesse Marks, John Redden, Charles Robinson, Harold Russell, Joe Scanlon, Rand Warner.

Young Railfans Dates:

Sat. Jan. 22	10 AM-3 PM
Sat. Feb. 5	10 AM-3 PM
Sat. Feb. 19	10 AM-3 PM

Have you renewed your Chapter Membership?

Membership Contact:

Janet Dittmer, Membership Chair
983 N. Winton Rd.
Rochester, NY 14609-6824
<daveluca@frontiernet.net>

Membership Report

Janet Dittmer, Chair

Welcome to these new members:

Robert C. Fleck

102 Pin Oak Lane
Rochester, NY 14622
338-7205; rcfleck@rochester.rr.com

Interests: Rolling stock restoration; Trips; Museum tour guiding; Library; Publications and Historical research; Museum operations; Track car driver.

Mike and Amy Holloway

40 Cannock Drive
Fairport, NY 14450
425-7773; jmh98@cornell.edu

Interests: Rolling stock restoration; Trips

David and Susan Mitchell

1106 South Creek Drive
Webster, NY 14580
872-5264; dbmitch@rochester.rr.com

Interests: Rolling stock restoration; Library; Publications and Historical research; Museum operations; Track car driver. Also Editor/publisher of RMRR "Call Board". Former owner of CAT and J.D. Bulldozers. Retired electrical engineer at Kodak paper mill.

New Addresses:

Ron Amberger

68 Eale Pine Way
Rochester, NY 14623

Ralph Mosher

715 Telephone Road
West Henrietta, NY 14586
359-0986; ralphmosher@frontiernet.net

Ryan Kane

205 Herman Drive
North Syracuse, NY 13212
315-452-0661; rkane79@gmail.com

Phone change:

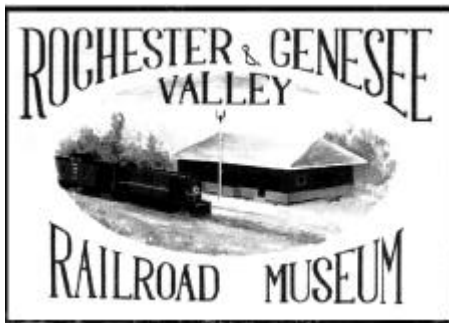
Bob Fitch: 358-8629

If you have recently moved and changed your phone number, please advise us of your new number. Thanks, Janet

Membership Rates:

National + Chapter membership: . \$40
Above as Family membership \$50
Local* \$20
Local as Family*..... \$27
(* Holds National membership elsewhere)

National only \$20
National as Family only \$23
Subscriptions only: \$10*
* Effective January 1, 2005.



MUSEUM MUSINGS

An interesting article crossed my desk this morning. Its aim is to help business owners decide what makes their business unique.

In marketing, there's a common term called the USP—the "Unique Selling Proposition."

A USP is simply all those things that make a business (or any enterprise such as a museum) unique in the customer's mind. Note that the emphasis is on the customer. It doesn't matter what we think is special. All that matters is what the customer thinks is special.

In promoting the Rochester & Genesee Valley Railroad Museum, we need to make sure that we promote our USP.

The challenge comes in that the USP is different for different people.

A railfan may drool over the fact that we have LV 211. Yet railfans make up only a small portion of our guests.

A family with young children in tow may only care about the entertainment value of the track car ride.

A teacher who books a tour may want to have the visit augment a lesson taught in the classroom.

And so it goes.

Every activity available to someone at the time we're open is potential competition. We need to have and identify what will make a person, a family or a class change what they are doing to come visit us. And we need to communicate that to each of our potential guests in a unique way that hits that decision makers "hot button."

Once we've done the marketing job, we need to deliver flawlessly - every time. As they say, you are only as good as your last review!

In the months ahead, museum management, along with our partners at the NYMT, will continue to identify (and enhance) every USP that we can. >>>>

Managers

Railroad: (Motive, Rolling stock, MOW, ROW)

Chris Hauf: 381-8583; crhauf@frontiernet.net

Infrastructure: (Buildings, grounds, shops, construction, communications, signals & power, heavy equipment)

Dave Luca: 288-0318; daveluca@frontiernet.net

Visitor Experience: (Visitor, Train & Track Car operations, 4-Q Vision, Special events)

Dale Hartnett: 243-0139; dhartnet@foxrochester.com

We appreciate everything all our volunteers do to help us be unique!

Help Wanted

Museum Education Assistant:

Volunteer position for a self-starter to develop co-curricular educational materials for school groups and youth groups visiting Rochester & Genesee Valley Railroad Museum. Ideal for a retired history or science teacher. Need not be a railfan but must be interested in helping young people understand the world around them. Contact Dale Hartnett dhartnett@rochnrhs.org

Young Railfan Assistant:

Volunteer position to assist in coaching young adults age 14-21 as part of the Rochester Chapter's Youth Program. Involves a commitment of 6 hours per day, 2 Saturdays a month. Skills needed include handyman skills and good personal interaction/training skills. Must be physically fit enough to lift 50 pounds or more, spend 5 hours on feet and walk rough terrain. Ideal for scout leader ready to move to an older, more independent group. Must have a sincere interest in helping young people grow to become contributing adults.

Contact Dale Hartnett
dhartnett@rochnrhs.org

Motive Power Update

by John Redden

Diesel Locomotives

In December, the Museum operated its annual Christmas Tree trips from Remelt's tree farm, adjacent to the right-of-way. Steve Huse organized this event, with crews for two weekends. Our trusty EK-6 provided the motive power for these trips. With its new batteries, that were acquired thanks to the donations of many Chapter members in 2003, this unit is again a very reliable and useful locomotive. It performed well for a total of four days in early / mid December.

Over the years, we have assembled or purchased a total of seven battery chargers

for our diesel locomotives. It is imperative that we keep these large batteries on trickle charge over the winter, in order to keep them from going "flat". If this were to happen, the specific gravity of the battery acid reaches a point where our winter temperatures would cause them to freeze and burst, thus destroying our considerable investment. Locomotives generally use 32 Volt or 64 volt battery sets, so off-the-shelf chargers are rarely available. We've come to rely upon our talented staff of electrical professionals to build, purchase, and maintain these specialized tools. This month, Dan Waterstraat built and donated a brand new charger for locomotive LV-211, which will allow us to retire an older charger. Thanks to all of our electrical guys, and especially to Dan this month, for their continued support of Motive Power.

Nathan Dunn and Dale Hartnett removed the electrical cabinet doors from locomotive 1941. They were moved up to the Restoration Building for cleaning and repainting. John Redden has chipped some of the old paint from the cab interior of this loco, and has been working on the #2 cab heater.

Norm Shaddick serviced the batteries on diesel locos 1843, and 1654. He also shifted one of our battery chargers temporarily, from one engine to another, to assist in keeping all of the batteries charged in December.

Dave Luca assisted with the Christmas Tree trips in early December, by bringing out window polish to the Museum, and polishing the engineer's cab window on EK-6. Thanks, Dave.

Gasoline Locomotives

Norm Shaddick continued preventive maintenance on the Trackmobile #2 this month. Thank you, Norm.

Kevin Klees worked on the transmission cross shaft for the Plymouth locomotive this month. This is a large (and heavy!) steel shaft that transmits the power from the friction wheel clutch, to the chain drive for the axles. Kevin removed the old flat keys, and their attachment machine screws from this shaft. This job also entailed removing remnants of two broken screws, a very time-

(Continued on Page 4)

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Motive Power

(Continued from Page 3)

consuming task. Once this was completed, he was able to install brand new, custom-made keys, using new cap-screws. Kevin also disassembled the old radiator fan for this locomotive, and found that it needs new ball bearings.

Steam Locomotives

Ron Amberger continued work on the Heisler Fireless. He has cleaned up more parts of the running gear, and has cleaned up the valve seats on the original Okadee tank-blown valve.

Thanks to Dale Hartnett, Norm Shaddick and Kevin Klees for contributing to this article.

Metal Shop Progress

by Rand Warner

Kevin Klees' machine shop is making great progress, and even more importantly, is making great PARTS!

Functional metal working machinery in the Restoration Building area now includes large lathe, small lathe, small horizontal mill, floor grinder, cut-off saw, drill press, and horizontal band saw.

To date, new, replica parts have been made by Kevin for the Plymouth and Heisler locos, using the lathes and mill, for which he has put together a good set of tooling.

The other machines have been used by many people, working on the Heisler and Plymouth locos, and assorted pieces of heavy construction equipment, and maintenance-of-way equipment.

Now if we could just get a vertical band saw operational, that would be really great!

Another Mystery Photo

This recent photograph was submitted by Jesse Marks. As you see, it has been restored/updated for non-railroad use. Where is it? (Answer on Page 5)



News at the North End

by Rand Warner

NYMT personnel have relocated P&W Trolley #168 from the South leg of the Loop track, outdoors, to the existing track in the new trolley barn, indoors.

The second track into the new enclosure is taking shape. Subgrade has been excavated and ballast spread. Charlie Lowe and son, Trevore, Randy Bogucki and Tony Mittiga have spaced ties from the switch to the back end of the carhouse. Switch timbers and all steel for the new switch are on site.

Harold Russell and Bob Achilles have put the track motor cars and passenger trailer cars to bed for the winter. Antifreeze has been checked, batteries serviced, and tarps applied to the cars stored outside.

News at the South End

by Rand Warner

Track Superintendent, Randy Bogucki, has located, inspected, procured and had delivered 300 very good 7"x9" relay ties from Buffalo, following authorization by the Board. This stock will support new track construction.

Siding #6 is being extended Southward on the plateau south of the Restoration Building, under the direction of Dave Luca. This will provide increased storage capacity for relocation of stored cars.

We are investigating short term and long term storage options for our Excursion Car set, currently located at Newark, on the OMID. Options include building a dedicated storage siding at our Museum complex.

Have you renewed your Chapter Membership?

Library Report

Charles Robinson, Chairman

The library will be open for general use on Sunday afternoon **January 23, 2005** between the hours of **2 to 5 PM**.

The library's popularity has increased with many arriving to check out a few tapes from our now sizable collection. I am certain that you too can find a delightful tape in the chapter's collection. So come on out.

Gale Smith is now cataloging the newest addition to our tape collection from the estate of Dan Cosgrove, a gift from the Cosgrove family. We are grateful for this large interesting addition to the Chapter's tape collection.

The current project at the library now that the Richard Barrett collection has been inventoried is gathering together the remaining boxes of railfan material that are to be sent to a New England railfan group. Jerry Gillette and the library chairman are now tackling this problem to relieve the congestion in the library.

The water pipes to the library froze and the useful water supply to the library was shut off until the pipes defrosted with the arrival of warmer weather. Bob Miner has taken steps to prevent a repeat of this difficulty and we all appreciate his efforts in this regard. However just in case there are now four gallon water jugs in the restroom for emergency flushing of the toilet if the water should be cut off again.

The library chairman has been successful at least up to this time in stopping the leaks into the east cupola. However the skylight leaks in the copy machine room remain a problem so avoid leaving items on the round table in that room. I believe that we now have definite evidence that water indeed flows up hill. At least, that is our conclusion in relation to the leak on the lower side of the skylight. We have heat and water so come and see what is in the library.

Surplus Magazines Available

If not taken, they will be recycled!

The library has a large collection of *Trains*, *Railpace*, *Railroad and Railfan*, *Locomotive and Railroad Preservation*, *Model Railroader*, *NRHS National Railway Bulletin* plus other magazines that we will have to remove from the library and most likely put in the dumpster. These will, for a short period, be given away in bulk or in single issues to anyone. The library is opened Monday evenings between 7:30 to 9:00 PM except under adverse winter conditions.

Calendar 2005 Ahead

by Rand Warner

Sure looks like an exciting and busy year coming up for us all to enjoy and share the hobby with others:

January:

Year End Party (the 8th)

February

Caboose Campout (12th)

May

Young Railfan's Annual Breakfast (5th)

East Rochester Carshops Remembered (15th)

Chapter Banquet

June

Caboose Day (19th)

Chapter Meetings at Museum (16th)

Road Trip: Shawmut Days

July

Casey Jones Day (17th)

Historic Construction Equipment Display (31st)

Chapter Meeting at Museum (21st)

Road Trip: Bark Peelers Convention

August

Diesel Days (20th and 21st)

Chapter Meeting at Museum (18th)

September

Annual Picnic (10th)

Road Trip: St. Mary's 2-foot railroad

A Book Review:

"Tickets Please"

by Rand Warner

This is the title of another great book by our good friend just to the east of us, Richard Palmer. It was published by Meyer Book-binding Co. of Auburn in 2002, and covers "Trains, Trolleys, and Depots of Central New York", via reproductions of hand colored postcards.

It is a fabulous collection of Americana and railroading north and south, and east and west, throughout upstate New York; giving wonderful insight into the vibrant past of many railroads, trolley lines and communities.

Paging through the book is bound to send you off on a dozen journeys at least; to sniff out more history and remaining clues from the past. Don't miss this book.

Thanks to ...

Bob VanVanlkinburgh for donation of train crew training information, photo collection of South Buffalo Railway at Bethlehem Steel, and assorted color pictures.

Al Pastorell for making and installing the storm windows on the Agent's Office at the Depot.

Locomotive Engineers

by Harold Crouch

On New York Central's Syracuse Division, there was a passenger engineer by the name of Allen. He must have JUST met the MINIMUM height requirement of the railroad. When I first met him (during diesel days), if he sat back in his seat, he could not reach the horn cord, so had a rag tied on it to sound the horn when required! One day, while talking to a road foreman of engineers, I asked how Allen made out during steam locomotive days especially the big Niagaras Class S1-b.

The road foreman went on to related how, at Syracuse-Erie Boulevard Station -- when the signal to go was given, Allen would released the engine brake and then climb right up on the L8PA automatic brake valve stand to tug the throttle open to get the train started!

The throttle stayed wide open all the way from Syracuse to Buffalo. At mandatory slow downs (Seneca River, Lock Berlin curve, Brown Street in Rochester, etc.) Allen merely shortened the cut-off to the point where the train speed came down to that required! After passing the slow down, the cut-off was lengthened again to bring the train speed back up once again.

On arriving at Buffalo Central Terminal, Allen climbed back up on the brake valve

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stand to push the throttle closed. Must have been quite a sight!!

Then on the Mohawk Division, Selkirk to Dewitt, there was a freight engineer named Jigalo Jim who would only run his freight locomotive 35 MPH -- no faster!

As Dan Cosgrove has pointed out, dispatchers at times crossed freight trains over to the passenger iron. When Jigalo Jim was crossed over, the STILL would only run at 35 MPH, though he could have run faster!

However, on the River Division, Selkirk to Wheelawken, N.J., there was a freight engineer who went down on train VW-6 which was a local, making all the stops to Wheelawken.

On his return trip, he had WB-3, The Banana Job (a solid train of refrigerator cars loaded with bananas bound for Montreal, Canada via NYC's Adirondack Division). On this run, he "squeezed" the speed limit -- he was on his way home!

One day while talking to a road foreman on engines, the road foreman remarked that he was thinking of handing a stalk of banana in the cab of train VW-6 and perhaps the engineer would go a little faster! I never did hear whether this 'experiment' was tried, nor what the results were.

Thus it can be seen that the railroad had a great diversity in its locomotive engineers!

Wanted

- High profile and low profile track jacks, single or double action type
- Wheel stops for ends of siding spur tracks or temporary end of track
- More good relay ties; 7" x 9" preferred.
- More good relay switch timbers
- More good #3A stone ballast
- Right hand #10 turnout, 105#/yd. or more
- High sulphur off-road diesel fuel (red); clean--no water--no bugs!
- Bobcat style skid steer loader
- Cantilever jacks for work on passenger

Answer to Mystery Photo

This depot was located on the Hojack line. It is located on Railroad Ave. in Hilton. The Depot has been previously restored and is now used as a home for small businesses. [Jesse Marks photos]



This is the sign over the entrance to the building.

Installation #4 on the Telegraph**The "Bug"**

by Chris Haulser

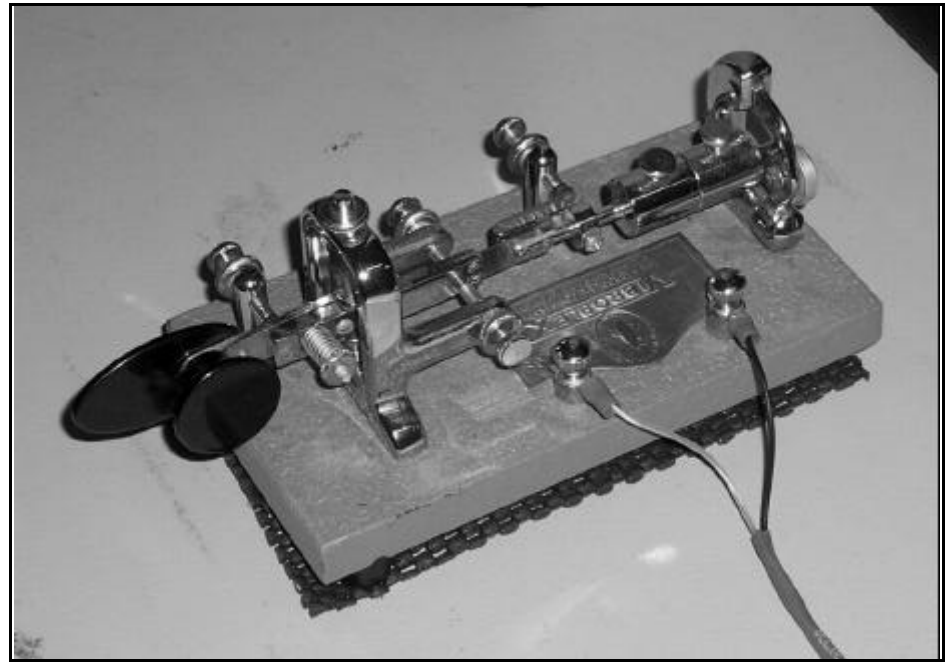
The "Bug" or more correctly "semiautomatic telegraph transmitter" was developed in the first decade of the 20th Century to address a couple of problems with the standard or "straight" telegraph key.

Using a straight telegraph key, a telegrapher had to form the individual dots and dashes of the Morse Code separately by holding onto the key knob and moving his wrist vertically, once for each. Many first rate telegraphers began suffering from what then was called "Telegrapher's Paralysis" but what today we call "carpal tunnel syndrome" (and for which was advertised "Telegrapher's Liniment" which if rubbed into the affected area "would remove all stiffness and soreness from the arm almost instantly".or not).

There had been earlier attempts to address this problem with special keys. The J. H. Bunnell "Sideswiper" was one example of this where the vertical motion of the straight key was replaced with a horizontal motion. Another strange example was referred to as a "pump handle" key. There is an example of this odd key in the little museum in the front of the station at the Arcade & Attica RR. In either case, however, the telegrapher still had to make each individual dot and dash manually.

In addition, telegraphers prided themselves on their sending ability, with speed and clarity being very important. It may be hard to believe today, but public telegraph sending contests were held. Imagine an auditorium full of people, most of them telegraphers. A telegrapher would be seated on the stage at a set of telegraph instruments, sending some text. It made no difference what the actual text was but the audience would listen carefully to the "quality" of the sending. After a particularly spectacular sending demonstration, the audience would sometimes give the telegrapher a standing ovation. So, anything which would allow telegraphers to send faster with no loss of clarity was looked on by them with favor.

One well respected telegrapher, Horace G. Martin was trying to address these problems. It has been reported that he suffered from telegrapher's paralysis. Earlier he had developed what he called the "Autoplex" which made the dots automatically. It did this using an electromagnet which of course required a battery to power it. Batteries were jars of noxious chemical liquids back then and not very portable. As a result, although the Autoplex worked, it



didn't sell. Martin didn't give up and eventually developed what he called the "Vibroplex". This used the motion of a weighted pendulum, initiated by the telegrapher, to automatically make the dots. It did not require any batteries and so was easily portable. Introduced around 1905, the Vibroplex quickly caught on, particularly among top rated telegraphers who worked the fastest circuits. Using the Vibroplex took a bit of care and experience and when less skilled telegraphers started using them they were at first accused of transmission errors due to excessive or clipped dots until they got the "hang" of the instrument. The Vibroplex allowed experienced telegraphers to send faster with much less effort. It also used a side to side motion to either avoid or overcome an already existing case of "telegrapher's paralysis".

Its not exactly clear why the Vibroplex and other similar semiautomatic telegraph transmitters picked up the nickname "bug". It may be because the instruments have a kind of a multi-legged "insect look" to them. It may be because of the fluttering motion of the pendulum. It might even have to do with the transmission problems caused by inexperienced operators using the instrument as the word "bug" had long been associated with problems causing false signals in telegraph systems. In any case, the nickname stuck and today any semiautomatic dot making telegraph key is called a "bug".

The Vibroplex Company tried to capitalize on this in the 1920's by applying for trademarks for a "roach looking insect", the name "Lightning Bug" for their latest model instrument, the No. 6, and for the word

This "Bug" was used by many telegraphers on the railroad in place of the traditional key. The bug was the mainstay of amateur rail operators who used CW (continuous wave) operations. [Photo by Chris Hauf]

"bug" itself. In a court case against J. H. Bunnell Company who also made "bugs", they were denied this last, but the No. 6 did become known as the "Lightning Bug" and all models started showing the "insect image" on their labels. The Vibroplex company is still in business today and still making several models of "bugs".

Despite the improved productivity which resulted from the use of "bugs", the companies would not provide them for their telegraphers. Telegraphers, if they wanted one, had to provide their own. The same was true with typewriters, another "new technology" of the time. Because the wiring to the company provided straight keys was frequently under the telegrapher's desk, it was not quick or easy to connect a bug into the circuit that way. To address this problem, the "wedge plug" was developed which allowed a bug to be quickly paralleled with a straight key by inserting the wedge plug underneath the lip of the circuit closer switch on the straight key. It was just as easily disconnected at the end of the telegrapher's work shift.

Another installment will be in the February issue. There are several more in the 'works'.

The **BIGGEST** Christmas Present Ever!

by Joe Scanlon

Being a museum, we get reports of all manner of things that people feel need to be preserved. Many of them are not appropriate for inclusion in our various museum collections, but every once in awhile something demands serious consideration. Such was the case when one of the crane operators I work with, Mr. Eddie McMichael, relayed the following situation to me:

The Buffalo Crushed Stone Company had a worked-out gravel pit in Alfred Station, New York. They expended considerable and expensive effort to reclaim the land to its original natural beauty. They relocated their crushing and screening plant to another gravel deposit nearby. They also took their conveyors, haul trucks and loaders with them.

But they left behind two Northwest cranes that had been faithful and steady workhorses at the gravel operation literally for decades. The Northwests were carefully maintained because they were the lifeblood of the operation. Unfortunately, they are outmoded by today's standards as too slow and expensive to operate in a 21st century mining operation.

Last winter the used construction equipment industry experienced a real upsurge in popularity when the Chinese steel industry began purchasing scrap steel at previously unheard of prices. The bad news was that historical construction equipment was being cut up at record rates as it was finally cost effective to get rid of the old iron. Machines dating back to World War II were being turned into 3-foot long chunks of steel. Moreover, the need for the old friction shovels and cranes has pretty well evaporated, since their hydraulic powered replacements have now been available for over 30 years. In the past year alone, a number of these old machines have been sold and cut up all over New York State.

But Mr. Douglas Drake, Superintendent of the Alfred Station operation for Buffalo Crushed Stone, didn't want to see old number 300 sent to the scrap yard in pieces. He had spent a lot of time over his career helping to maintain the old Northwests. Joe Scanlon went down to see the old cranes. There he got to renew an old acquaintance - Mr. Dave Firmstone, Vice President of Buffalo Crushed Stone. Back in the 1960's Joe had worked with Mr. Firmstone helping to build a section of Rochester's Inner Loop for the S.J. Groves and Sons Company. When Mr. Firmstone learned of the mission



[Chris Hauf photo]

of our Historical Construction Equipment Museum, he obtained permission from the owner of the Buffalo Crushed Stone Company, Mr. Steven Detweiler, to donate one of the Northwest cranes to our museum. Mr. Doug Drake then arranged for the retired operator of the crane to walk it out to where we could load it.

Northwest machines were a common sight on the Rochester construction scene in the 1940s, 50's and 60's. Two Northwest shovel fronts performed all of the heavy blasted rock excavation on the Inner Loop project Joe and Mr. Firmstone had worked on together, between East Avenue and Scio Street. Northwests were used to help excavate for Midtown Plaza, the infamous Can of Worms interchange and street rebuilding projects all around the Rochester area. The company I now work for, C.P. Ward, Inc., had a number of them.

The day came to go down to Alfred Station and load out old number 300 to bring it up to our museum. This became another one of those magical events that make our museum so special. Jim Schreiner showed up with his 18-wheeler to haul the crane. But in order to haul the 50 ton crane with 60 feet of crane boom sticking out the back, Jim had added a stinger to the trailer, and had 34 wheels on the ground! The rig stretched out to 90 feet long! Jim also brought along his brother Frank, who had worked a number of years for the Arthur V. Towner Construction Company.

Mr. Pat Murphy, retired head of the Rochester local of the International Operating Engineers Union, had heard of our acquisi-

tion and came along with Art Mummery to be the operator of the crane for us. Pat Murphy has restored his own Northwest model 25 crane. Mr. Doug Drake had his equipment superintendent and a helper there with a boom truck to assist. By the time we arrived at the location, Doug's crew had the crane running and all warmed up. Joe Scanlon and Scott Gleason came along. Even Mr. Firmstone showed up to make sure everything went right! Pat Murphy smoothly walked the Northwest up onto the trailer and carefully lowered the boom to travel. The chains and binders came out and soon the overweight, over-length load was headed North to the museum.

On a cold, rainy December day, over a dozen veteran heavy equipment men helped make the magic happen, and it was more than just another day's work. All told, we had a crew of over 300 years experience to make sure the Northwest got safely loaded! It was really something to see! This cold and wet crew went home that day, knowing that they had helped preserve a piece of the history of our industry.

A 1957 Northwest model 6 crawler crane now sits out at our museum this Christmas season, ready to go to work. Even you ALCO locomotive fans will be impressed by the throaty growl of the 6-cylinder Murphy diesel!

Come check out the biggest Christmas present ever, as it sits proudly over by our locomotive turntable with its 60 feet of boom up in the air, awaiting its next work assignment, now preserved for generations to

Rochester Chapter National Railway Historical Society
The Semaphore
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Happy New Year

Chapter Meeting & Program:
1973 NRHS Convention
by Bop Mader
7:30 PM
Thursday, January 20, 2005
40 & 8 Club
933 University Ave.

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Contributions to *The Semaphore* are welcomed and encouraged from all readers. They should be mailed to: Gale E. Smith, 299 Seneca Park Avenue, Rochester, NY 14617-2433. Phone: (585) 544-6221. Contributors using a computer are asked to send their submissions on any MS-DOS diskette in ASCII or *.txt format, as well as a printed copy. Also can send by e-mail to: gale299@frontiernet.net. **Deadline: First Day of Each Month.**

Pouring the Restoration Facility Floor!

The Restoration Building is up and running! Now we need to provide it with a concrete floor. We raised the dust to finish the space. Now we've faced with dust all over the place. One hundred dollars will buy a batch of concrete. The estimate for the floor is \$25,000; we'll need 250 batches (!). Help "cement" together a great project. Maybe we'll even let you write your name and date in a slab! [Don Shilling] (Each block indicates \$1,000)

InterNet (World Wide Web) address:
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