

# VOLUNTEER RAILROADERS ASSOCIATION



## THE DIGEST

GUESS WHO IS COMING TO TOWN?

VOLUME 14, ISSUE 4

NOVEMBER 2009

### **Santa is coming to town.... But he can't do it without YOU!**

As you probably know by now we have scheduled our annual Santa Train rides for December 5<sup>th</sup> to be run out of the Route 23 Transit Center in Wayne. The trains will depart at 9:30AM, 12 Noon and 2:30PM which will give us some extra time between trains so we can load and unload the trains. We will not be running any train on the Erie side this year due to conflicts with the trains NJT runs into Giants Stadium and the lack of extra crews that creates.

So instead of an extra day we have asked NJT if they can give us at least a 9 car train so we can try and accommodate as many of our passengers as possible, and they have agreed. What that means to us is we will only have to staff the trains for one day, but it also means we need to have more people working the trains on the 5<sup>th</sup>. It also means we will need 4 Santa's, 4 Mrs. Santa's, 4 Elves and at least 4 other characters. Plus we will now need to have car hosts for 9 cars. In addition to avoid the problems we had

with parking and on the platform we are going to need more help in those areas as well. In all we will need over 40 people to make these trains a success.

Please write December 5<sup>th</sup> down on your calendar and come out and be part of this great day. Also please ask your friends and relatives if they would like to wear a costume or help direct traffic and or people.

Then call the station, 973-238-0555 or send an e-mail to [vratrips@yahoo.com](mailto:vratrips@yahoo.com) and say you want to volunteer. Running these trips is some of the best days we have together and while it is a bit of work it is also a great deal of fun. When the day is over everyone who works the train is invited to join us in a thank you dinner at a local restaurant where we have lots of laughs and

unwind.

I look forward to seeing you all on December 5<sup>th</sup> and to a successful day out on the rails.

*K.C. Smith*



Santa meets with children onboard the VRA's 2008 Santa Excursion

*Photo by: Gary R. Kazin*

### **MEETING:**

*Thursday, November 19th, 2009*  
St. Clements Church  
271 Lafayette Ave  
Hawthorne NJ 07506

Meeting starts at 7:30 pm and will be followed by a short presentation of Railroad History.

If you would like a hard copy of this newsletter mailed to you, please email Jon Berkemeyer at [berkemeyerj@yahoo.com](mailto:berkemeyerj@yahoo.com).

Copies will be available at the meeting as well.

## BRUSH CLEARING ON THE STEWARTSTOWN RAILROAD

BY: CHARLES SMITH

On Sunday, October 25<sup>th</sup>, the Volunteer Railroaders went to the Stewartstown Railroad in Stewartstown, PA. We had been asked to bring our A5 mower car to help clear the line which had largely been unused for several years. The railroad was hosting a NARCOA motorcar trip the following Saturday. KC Smith, Craig Hartman, Tim Stack, Ken Ciparis, and myself went to operate the car. KC and I drove out Saturday evening and were the guests of Ken and Renee Bitten. They were very gracious hosts and thank them both for their hospitality.

Sunday dawned clear and cold. Tim met us at the Bitten's home and we set off for the Stewartstown Station to meet up with Craig and Ken. At the station we were joined by other volunteers from the Northern Central Railroad and

friends of the Stewartstown Railroad. KC unloaded the A5 from the trailer. The A5 would lead a Reading motorcar and two hi-rail trucks south from Stewartstown. The 70 pound rail was certainly a change from riding the modern NYS&W earlier this year. Along the way, we encountered a few downed trees and a particularly imposing wash-out which was located along the side of a steep hill.

The A5 performed well until one of the blades on the mower deck sheared off. We removed the unbalanced blade and proceeded south while members of the Northern Central took their hi-railer to a nearby hardware store in search of a replacement blade. We made it about two more miles down the railroad when the other blade cracked in a very loud

BOOM! While Tim and KC affected repairs with the one blade that the volunteers had gotten for us, the Northern Central folks went and got another from the same hardware store. Once repaired, we were on the road bound for New Freedom, PA and the Stewartstown's connection with the former Northern Central Branch of the Pennsylvania Railroad. We arrived at 3:30pm and the A5 was turned. Off we were again, bound for Stewartstown. With a good knowledge of the crossings now gained, we were able to make good time on the return trip. The A5 was onto the trailer and we were headed for home by 6pm. The Stewartstown Railroad expressed their thanks for our efforts and we all certainly hope we can visit them again in the near future

## URHS REPORT

BY: K.C.SMITH

By the time you read this the URHS will have run their first passenger train in many years. This was made possible by the West Jersey Chapter of the NRHS stepping up to do the leg work to run the train. But it would not have been possible without the VRA. We not only gave input on operations but we also handled the ticketing and most of the advertising materials. I would like to thank Charles Smith for once again going above and beyond to make this train a success.

A few dates have announced for events you might find interesting. The first is March 7<sup>th</sup> which is the 2010 date for the Jersey Central Chapters Train Show at Mother Seton High School in Clark. Then on March 20<sup>th</sup> the URHS will host their annual EastRail program at Warren Hills High School.

Work has been continuing on the many pieces of equipment stored at Boonton Yard. Our own Steve Geritsen has been appointed as a yard manager at Boonton and he and his co-manager Larry Gross have been doing a good job getting work done. The URHS is currently working with NJT

to secure the yard by putting up a fence all around the yard. This has taken a lot of work and we are not done yet but with any luck the fence will be started before the end of the year.

The URHS has been asked to move the equipment that is currently be worked on in Lebanon due to local NIMBY's. For that move to take place the URHS has stated that the fence at Boonton needs to be built to protect all those pieces that have been or will be shortly restored. As stated above, NJT is working very closely with the URHS to see that the fence gets built.

The New Jersey Seashore Lines, the same folks who run the Cape May Seashore Lines, have asked the URHS if they can lease the CNJ 1524, the GP-7 at Boonton. They made this request because they have just taken over the operations of the ex-CNJ Southern Secondary between Woodmansie and Lakehurst, NJ. This line once hosted the 1524 and her sisters and Tony Macrie, the President of the NJSL, is interested in seeing her run the line again. The vote to lease the engine was a unanimous yes so some day in the not to distant future

you can see the 1524 running on home rails. Passenger train are also possible on the line, so someday maybe we can help run a train over the line.

The URHS sent a few of its representatives, Curt Springstead and myself, to the last Friends of the NJ Transportation Heritage Center board meeting to try and find out what was going on with the Site Committee. After seeing that nothing much was going on it was decided that with the help of the URHS the committee will meet soon and come up with a game plan that will hopefully lead to finally finding a site for the Heritage Center.

Liberty State Park has once again entered the picture as a possible site for at least some of the equipment in the URHS collection. There is still a lot of work to do, but the current plans call for a trolley loop to move people from parking lots and around the park. Also equipment representing railroads that once called Jersey City Terminal home may someday be under the train sheds. Wouldn't that be a great site to see? Like the lottery says... Hey, you never know.

TOYS FOR TOTS SPECIAL TRAIN

BY: K.C. SMITH

On December 12-13, 2009, the Military Transport Association will be running a special train in Northern New Jersey to collect donated toys for the [U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots Foundation](#). Along the route, the train will stop at ten locations where members of the public can drop off toys, see Santa Claus and his helpers, experience a variety of working railroad equipment, and meet members of the Marine Corps the MTA and the VRA.

Four railroads are loaning engines, rolling stock, and use of their tracks to Operation Toy Train. They are the Morristown & Erie, New York, Susquehanna & Western, Norfolk Southern, and New Jersey Transit. On December 12<sup>th</sup> the train will cover a number of M&E lines and make 4 stops in Flanders, Ledge-wood, Dover and Rockaway. Then on

December 13<sup>th</sup> the train will cover the NYSW's southern division stopping at Maywood, Hawthorne, Wortendyke, Wyckoff, Pompton Lakes and Butler.

Now where do we fit into this project? Well at each stop volunteers will be needed to handle what is expected to be some good sized crowds and handle cleaning up after the train leaves. We will not need to cover Maywood as the station group there will handle things. So we have been asked to cover the other 5 stations. Because of the train schedule we should be able to use 2 crews to cover the stations. We would like to have at least 5 volunteers on one crew and 3 on the other. This is because the stops in Hawthorne, Wyckoff and Butler will have access to both sides of the tracks by the public and we will need to make sure everyone is clear of

the tracks as the train pulls in and out.

So if you can volunteer either or both days please call the station, 973-238-0555 or drop an e-mail to [vratrips@yahoo.com](mailto:vratrips@yahoo.com) and say what day you can help. Saturday the 12<sup>th</sup> will start at about 9AM and run through 4PM. Sunday will be a little longer with the day starting at about 9:30AM and ending at about 5:15PM. This should be a worthwhile and enjoyable day, why not come out and help.

The mission of the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots Program is to collect new, unwrapped toys during October, November, and December each year and distribute those toys as Christmas gifts to needy children in the community where the campaign is conducted. <http://njoperationtoytrain.com/>

40B UPDATE

BY: CRAIG HARTMAN

As the year draws to its inevitable end, we wrap up another year of work on the 40B. The main mechanical frame has been sandblasted, painted and put back together along with the engine, sub frame and most of the wood components. It actually looks like a motorcar once again!

We had the enjoyment of firing it up the other night, and listening to her roar her defiance into the night! (much to the pleasure of our neighbors I am sure). The sheet metal for the body must now be prepped and painted and then assembled on the car, and she is done! Now to find a proper storage and display place to show her off. There is still work to do, so be a part of it!

I have cleaned out my shop (EGAD!) and we can push her in and work in the warmth and light. Watch for updates on work days!



Craig, KC and Terance Meiley, the 40B's previous owner, inspect the car after a work session.

Photo by: Charles Smith

To follow the progress of the 40B or to find out more information on work sessions join the VRA's Yahoo group.

[finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/](http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/)

  
**Organization**

VOLUNTEER RAILROADERS  
ASSOCIATION

80 Royal Avenue  
Hawthorne NJ 07506-1810  
973-238-0555

**Craig W. Hartman**

President

**KC Smith**

Vice President

**Charles Smith**

Secretary

**Carolyn Hoffman**

Treasurer

Board of Directors

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**Paul Trabert**

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Digest Editor

**Jon Berkemeyer**

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Angelo Dattolo, Esq.



*Remember... The VRA Santa Train is  
December 5th! Santa needs you!*

## PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS

Wow, I can't believe it has been three years that I have had the privilege of being your President of the VRA.

In these three short years, we have accomplished much together, and have much to go. We have experienced sadness and joy, the pride of accomplishment and the frustration of not completing what we started. We have worked with several railroads, helping maintain their lines, ridden many railroads, including some new trackage, and had a good time in doing so. We have also run many Easter Bunny and Santa Train Rides in this time, always selling out to an enthusiastic and well receiving crowd. Even as this is being written, we once again prepare for another of

the Santa Train Excursions, as several of us were putting out signs yesterday. We are all in this together, and our success does not ride on just the President or one or two individuals, but rather on the group as a whole, with all of our strengths and weaknesses combined as a group dynamic. Time is hard to come by for most of us, but we do it, volunteers are scarce, yet we go on, as we should. Railroad history is riding on us and groups like us, if we cease to exist, so will the history of railroading. It is up to us, we must survive, and get more young people involved to carry us forward or cease to exist. Infighting and sarcasm must stop, as it is no fun to work with this over your head. Good natured kidding and

fun is the spice of working together, but selfish pride and nastiness will not net us long staying members. I look forward to finishing the 40B this year (we ran it just the other night), seeing the station moved (it still suffers more damage from trucks almost on a regular basis), and continue our JKW fund, library and excursions as we go forward. May God Bless you and your family as we go into the Holiday Season.

Craig W. Hartman

President, Volunteer Railroaders