



# The PLS GAZETTE

A newsletter of the Pennsylvania Live Steamers, Inc.

**MAY-JUNE TOPICS:** Green Signals Ahead 1 Spring Meet Thanks 2 Successful Pot Luck Dinner 3 Donations 3 Thanks to Bob Thomas 3 Membership News 3 Membership Gauge 3 Engine for Sale 3 1" Car Barn Started 3 Spring Meet Photos 4 People at PLS: Walt Mensch 6

## Green Signals Ahead

There are many facets to the model railroading hobby from very small N gauge equipment running on coffee table size layouts to elaborate HO and O gauge railroads with sophisticated electronic controls systems running multiple trains against the backdrop of fantastic scenery, sky, and lighting that takes you from dawn to the dark of the night. There is G gauge or Garden Railways that share both indoor and outdoor track layouts that are equally elaborate. There is also the slice of the hobby in which we at PLS participate with track gauges from gauge one to 7 1/4". Regardless of the models size/gauge or mode of power there is one common denominator that binds the world of model trains together and that is they are most often copies of prototypical equipment from a bygone era.

What I find very interesting is one of the ways we go about reproducing the details in the engines and equipment we model and the lengths we go to find and reproduce those details. Where builder's drawings are limited or no longer available the common source is a photograph and as everyone knows "a picture's worth a thousand words" or the number of rivets in a side-frame, smoke box, cab or tender. Some of us have been known to travel thousands of miles just to see the last remaining example of a piece of equipment so we can take many pictures to capture otherwise elusive details. Many of you may know that our mem-



Both Photos, Frank Webb

**Top:** Western Maryland #6 at the Cass Railway, West Virginia. **Below:** The steam siphon on the WM #6

ber Jim Salmons is building a highly detailed 7 1/4" gauge Western Maryland Shay #6. He has some drawings and many photos that he took along with many photos I took during two of my trips to the current home of #6 in Cass, WV. I asked Jim if he was going to model the steam siphon on #6, but was told he did not remember the siphon. I sent him a photo I took showing the siphon that may not be original to the engine, but is there today and is used by the Cass Railway on every run it makes up the mountain.

A steam siphon is a simple a water pump. It allows an engine crew to pick up water from a pond, stream or

(Continued on page 2)



## Green Signals Ahead

(Continued from page 1)

track side tank by simply dropping a hose into a water source and turning on steam to the siphon. A tender can be filled in just a few minutes with a device that has no moving parts, only steam moving through the siphon's internal nozzle moves the water through the hose and pipe to the tender.

For those of you that have been to the Club House you might have noticed photos of a new unique electric engine that is being built by Bruce Saylor. This is a rare engine of the late 1920's. Bruce was able to photograph this engine to help with the details needed for its construction, and yes, there are plenty of rivets!

I have an engine that was modeled after a Canadian National Confederation U-2h, 4-8-4 (most often called a Northern) from the 6200 number series, circa 1944. One of our long time members, Frank Watson, well known for his train and railroad photography, wrote me a very nice letter and enclosed a 5 x 7 photo of a U-2. Only 6 of these engines survive today. Frank passed away a number of years ago, but his warm smile, thoughtfulness and photographs will be long appreciated and remembered.

It's fair to say that photography and trains go hand in hand and without them we would not be able to produce the fine detail in the equipment we build today.

See you on the Mainline,

*Frank Webb - President*

## 2013 PLS Calendar of Events

Saturday, June 15	Board of Directors Meeting - 9:30 AM Membership Meeting - 12:30 PM Afternoon/Evening Run*
Sunday, June 23	Run Day - Members & Guests
Sunday, June 30	Run Day Rain Date
Saturday, July 20	Board of Directors Meeting - 9:30 AM Membership Meeting - 12:30 PM Afternoon/Evening Run*
Saturday, July 20	<b>Club Picnic</b>
Sunday, July 21	Club Picnic Rain Date
Sunday, July 28	Run Day - Members & Guests - No Rain Date

## Spring Meet Thanks

Kathy Parris wishes to acknowledge those who helped from set up to clean up of the Kitchen and Snack Areas. Thanks to: Al Hein, Rose Ann Wagner, Julia Kiefer, Sue Borders, Sharon Connelly, Cathy Barker, Walt Mensch, Mary Saylor, Bruce Saylor, Barry Shapin, George Cooper, John Bortz Jr, Bruce Barrett, Joan Freer, Carol Quirk, Paul Rice, Barb Moore, Mike Moore, Sue Webb, Mary Ann Salmons, Dick Moore, Ross Magee, Dave Laird, Jim Rich, Roy Nelson, Dina Lampe, Barb Miller, Terry Weinstein, Kristina Shirey, Sean Skelonis, Deb Rose, Bob Wallace and many others who either pitched in to work or dropped off

baked goods. The continued support by Redner's Warehouse Markets is appreciated.

Several special acknowledgements need to be made: Al Hein, Rose Ann Wagner, Julia Kiefer, Sue Borders, Sharon Connelly, and Cathy Barker totally managed the kitchen and snack areas during our Saturday and Sunday sale hours. And our patrons were most complimentary of the pickled eggs and macaroni salad, made by Bruce and Mary Saylor, plus the baked beans made by Barry Shapin. These three items have been a very popular part of the kitchen menu for the past few years—and always sell out quickly.

Finally, PLS is most grateful to all those who responded to our baked goods plea. Delicious items arrived throughout the weekend and, at closing, very few were left.

## Pennsylvania Live Steamers, Inc.

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## Successful Pot Luck Dinner

I would like to thank Jay Shupard and his family for the organization of our Spring Meet pot luck dinner. I would also like to thank all those that brought side dishes and other good things to eat! The weather could have been a little better, but when it came

time to eat all seemed fine as most sat down under the big tent and enjoyed. Again, thank you to all that helped with this event.

— Frank Webb

## Donation Acknowledgements

PLS wishes to thank the following members for donations received during April and May: Barry Shapin, Daniel Jaycox, Michael Pontrelli, Daniel Kluz, Ronald Marburger, Jim Barker, Harry Quirk, Paul Quirk, George Lord, Jay Desai, and David Yingling.

## Thanks Bob

Bob Thomas has been a frequent contributor of technical and informative articles to the *Gazette* for some time. He has decided to take a break for a while. We are grateful for extensive contributions and hope he soon returns to his writing desk. Thanks Bob, for all you have given us.

— Allen Underkofler

## Club Membership News

PLS welcomes new Associate members Cal Douglas, Melissa Douglas, Harry W. Firth, Peg Wright, John Barrett, Marie Toner, Thomas Coyne, James Zaleski, H. Robert Wallace, Robert Stevenson, Carolyn Mlynarczyk, Victor Dubowski, Jeffrey Freeman, and Moriah Raymond, plus Minor members Chad Douglas, Owen Wright, and Gavin Godshall. Also, Terry Weinstein has applied for Regular membership

## Membership Gauge

As of May 31, PLS has:

**106 Regular Members**  
**249 Associate Members**  
**7 Honorary Members**

## Downsizing— Loco for Sale

I am selling the 7 ¼” gauge NYC Hudson started by Bill Normart 30 years ago that I finished in 2003. Steel tires were added to drivers in 2010. Brakes on loco and tender. Steel lead truck wheels, boiler. Two Super Scale injectors but no axle pump. Baker valve gear. New rod bushings in 2011. Tender has plastic water tank, vacuum pump for brakes, and battery for pump and loco lights. Reasonably priced. Asking \$26,750. Bruce Saylor H 610-666-6572 . C 610-812-6422. [bgsberk@comcast.net](mailto:bgsberk@comcast.net)



## Work Begins on 1" Car Barn

The most recent project at PLS, a car barn for 1” scale equipment, got underway with the removal of the sod which occupied the spot for the future building. The first step in construction was completed by renting a sod cutting machine which precisely removed an even layer of sod which was applied to less fortunate areas of the property. Walt Mensch’s backhoe will be used to complete the grading.

— Allen Underkofler





# Chilly Spring Meet

Photographs by Allen Underkofler

The first meet of the year felt like it started two months early. PLS members and visitors arriving at the club on Friday, May 24 were greeted with gray and mixed skies and temperatures in the low sixties resulting in an almost-empty track that first day. Things improved on Saturday and got much better on Sunday, but the overall turnout was low for what is traditionally a well-supported event. Threat of rain on Saturday caused the pot luck dinner to move to the clubhouse area rather than risk a weather calamity at the grove.



**Clockwise from Above:** Smallfry's on a small train led by Kaeden Peffel; Julia Kiefer runs her grandfather Ron Henderson's train with Ron trying to keep warm; Gauge 1 has its run; John Geib (foreground) and John Bortz, Jr. wait to enter station area; Fran Shirey and her friend go for a chilly ride.







**Left to Right, Top Row:** Ken Chermak's Southern PS-4; Victoria Shupard on Jay Shupard's 0-4-0 modified A3 switcher. **Second Row:** Bob Thomas on Saturday; Kaeden Peffel, signaling a right turn, and Laura Peffel on a 1" Reading RS-3; Cameron and Eric Peffel. **Third Row:** A fine line of cars on the modular layout of the Gauge 1 group. **Forth Row:** A flat car full of new tractors; Laura and Jay Shupard with Ken Chermak working the grill for the pot luck dinner.



# People at PLS

Compiled by Lynn Hammond

## Walter Mensch –

*A dedicated contributor to PLS for over forty years.*

**W**alt Mensch has been a major fixture of the Pennsylvania Live Steamers for many decades. Like many of us in the club, his interest in trains began at an early age.

### *Early Train Interest*

Plans for encouraging that interest were started even before he was born! In 1929, his grandfather ordered a Lionel train for himself from a local store. His grandfather was very disappointed when it arrived. It was a modest set and he wanted a much larger one. He was going to return it when his wife said that he should keep it for the new grandchild. On Christmas morning three-month old Walter received his first train set—a Lionel 248 box cab electric outline loco with two passenger cars, 629 and 630.

For many a Christmas afterwards, Walt would receive a freight car or accessory and his interest in trains grew. He was able to play with these trains throughout the year and eventually got a modest plywood based layout for the Lionel trains in his basement.

In the meantime, his grandfather had bought the large Lionel trains set that he wanted, a standard gauge steamer and passenger cars. Since he lived along the route that Walt took each day walking to school, Walt and his friends would often stop to watch and operate his grandfather's impres-

sive layout with the large scale trains. The interest in toy trains stayed with him all through High School—he had become a toy train collector.

### *Education and Work Experience*

In 1945, Walt got the opportunity to enroll in the Williamson Free School of Mechanical Trades, a live-in, all-expenses-paid trade school in Media, PA. This was an extremely meaningful experience for him and he has maintained close-ties with Williamson ever since.

He majored in “machine-shop-trade” and graduated in 1948 as a machinist. But Uncle Sam had other ideas about his future and he found himself enlisted in the Navy hoping for more experience as a machinist. In the infinite wisdom displayed by military personnel, the placement officer examined his credentials, and determined that he should become a aviation machinist mate. Sounds good, right? But a

machinist mate in the Navy is someone who repairs airplane engines—what most of us call a mechanic. It's just semantics that's all. For the next four years, Walt repaired 18 cylinder radial engines for the AD Skyraider at a Navy base in Rhode Island. He also learned a great deal about aircraft carrier catapults, a matter that would be very helpful later in life.

Walt got out of the Navy in 1952 and got a job at Stanley G. Flagg, a large manufacturer of pipe fittings in his native Pottstown. Walt was finally a machinist. But shortly after hiring, he was offered a better opportunity in the Engineering and Drafting Department which would involve design work as well as drafting. It was a great job, but nine months later the employees went out on strike. The strike lasted a long time and so Walt became an employee at Sanders & Thomas, Inc (also in his beloved Pottstown) doing design and drafting work in their Engineering Department. This company did much work on Navy catapults and



Allen Underkoffler



Walt's experience here paid off well for him. His work evolved to that of an illustrator for the manuals of the large machines designed by the company. After 25 years at this job, he got a chance to earn a P. E. in Engineering under a grandfathering provision. He worked at Sanders & Thomas until retirement in 1989.

Walt began moonlighting as a contractor while working at Sanders & Thomas. This extra activity was mostly carpentry and concrete work requiring the acquisition of equipment like a truck and cement mixer. He was still living with his parents at the time which prompted his father to recommend that Walt move to his own place. This got him started on building a home of his own which he had designed while still at Williamson. The design included a very large basement. Walt began by building a garage to hold his equipment on a property he purchased in 1956 on Sheep Hill road, just south of Pottstown. He then started the house he had earlier designed. He did much of the construction himself, finishing it in less than a year in 1959. The large basement provided space for a 13' x 37' three-rail layout, accessible through the garage. Walt held train-running exhibitions around Christmastime for many years.

### **Family**

Walt married Anita Miller in 1958. The couple moved into their newly-completed home on Sheep Hill Road on Christmas 1959. Sadly, Anita died in 2002 after a very long illness. They had no children.

### **PLS and the Live Steam Hobby**

Walt has been a long-standing member of the Train Collectors Association (TCA). At the 1973 TCA meet Walt had a selling table next to the table of a friend and accomplished train book author Al Stauffer. Al was selling an already-built kit by Stuart Models of a two-mill steam engine. Walt was fascinated by this small live steam device and bought it. After this exchange, Al told him about a live steam club located just above Collegeville. So in 1973, Walt became a member of the club, bringing him to

celebrate 40 years of active membership here at PLS.

In 1973, PLS had just completed a move from their previous home in Paoli and the small number of members were working hard to get a circle of track operational. This track was the multi-gauge track now at the center of the park. Walt was able to meaningfully contribute to this effort, given his background as designer/draftsman and a moonlighting contractor. Most people who observe the club today are relatively unaware of the huge effort required in cuts and fills to create the contour for the roadbed on which you ride today. Tons and tons of landfill material were trucked to the present club grounds and the track embankments had to be shaped. This was a tremendous civil engineering and construction job. So in the spring of 1974, Walt went out and bought a used backhoe—the one you can still see today being used on the property. He, along with the help of members Al Mercer and Bill Normart, bought a bulldozer (a TD-6 tracked front-end loader). Once the grading was finished, they later sold it to member Paul Culp who was building a large home layout.

Over the years Walt has contributed enormously to both the building and the running of the club. In three stints, he has been president of the club for 15 years—more than any other member. He is currently the club treasurer. He has been the unofficial organizer for volunteers on work days since 1989. Over the years he has contributed heavily to numerous major club projects too vast to list in entirety, but including Mercer bridge, all five tunnels and the buildings 3 and 6.

### **Walt's Trains at PLS**

Walt got involved in the live steam hobby big-time in 1976. Walt and another PLS member, Art Hacker purchased a 1" replica of live steam B & O 4-6-0 engine together. Unfortunately,



Allen Underkofler


Jim Salmons and Walt Mensch grab a snack at the 2011 Spring Meet.

Art, quite elderly at the time, passed away in 1978 ending the joint ownership of the ten-wheeler.

About this time Walt began the construction of a 1" model of a live steam Pacific (4-6-2). This popular Little Engines kit consisted of a pile of raw or un-machined castings and large amounts of metal stock. Fortunately the parts can be purchased a few at a time. The number of hours required to make this engine are almost impossible to calculate. Today that engine is almost finished.

In 1980, while still dutifully working on the Little Engines kit, Walt and three other PLS members, Al Mercer, Ken Rankin, and Nelson Eastwood formed a "syndicate" and purchased a fully running 1" 4-8-2 Mountain live steam engine which had been made by George Hoppes. George was one of the major forces behind the start of this club at Paoli in 1946.

Al Mercer passed away in 1992, but the "syndicate" survived by taking on Bill Manley as a replacement member. Then later Eastwood left for Florida and Manley dropped out leaving the "syndicate" down to two members. When Rankin moved to western Pennsylvania, he bought Walt out and took the engine with him.

In 1992, Walt purchased a 1" RS3 Diesel decorated for the Delaware and Hudson RR which had been owned by Al Mercer. Walt still owns that engine and he can be seen today riding on it around the PLS track. 





# The PLS GAZETTE

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## FIRST CLASS



***Don't Forget the Picnic!***

***July 20<sup>th</sup>, 5:30 P.M.***

***We supply the Hotdogs,  
Burgers & Ice Cream ...  
You bring a Favorite Dish  
& Beverages.***

***Donations Accepted.***