

# The Railyard Local

Volume 8, Issue 4

-The Monthly Newsletter of the Danbury Railway Museum-

June 2009

## Celebrating Owney, RPO Dog

Come tour our restored Railway Post Office Car, and get an "Owney" stamped souvenir on Saturday, June 13<sup>th</sup>! We will relate the true story of this famous rail-riding dog which became the mascot of the U.S. Post Office. Guests will find many other exhibits and attractions, including a turntable ride. Train rides are included in the \$8 admission price. Children under 3 are free.



This adorable "Owney" look-a-like dog, complete with brown jacket with red trim, dog name tag, and history is available in our Gift Shop for \$15.

## New Summer Hours

Monday - Saturday 10-5pm; Sunday 12-5pm  
Open 7 days a week! If you can help with staffing, please let us know!

## DRM Want Ad for Ad Person Advertising and Marketing Director Needed

Opportunity to help our Danbury Railway Museum in a **major** way! We are a dynamic organization! It is important that we get the word out about our Museum and what we have to offer. We do not want to be a well kept secret! In this economy, these services are needed more than ever.

The position will include promoting the Museum special events, maintaining a budget for yearly expenses, developing event flyers, obtaining advertising space for reasonable fees, tracking advertising results, and searching out new markets for the Museum. If you can help out in any of these areas, please contact the Museum at [info@danburyrail.org](mailto:info@danburyrail.org) to express an interest.

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## Guests Find Visit Speeds By DRM celebrates National Railroad Day

The Museum offered free train rides all day on May 9<sup>th</sup> for the price of admission. For many the highlight of their visit was a ride on a track speeder down Track 42 to the turntable and back. We offered the rides for the first time in seven years, thanks to Fred Marinelli (top photo) and Carl Ceragno (lower photo), who transported their speeders here, then spent the day delighting our visitors and volunteers. Many members of the public joined us in celebrating this nation's railroad heritage.



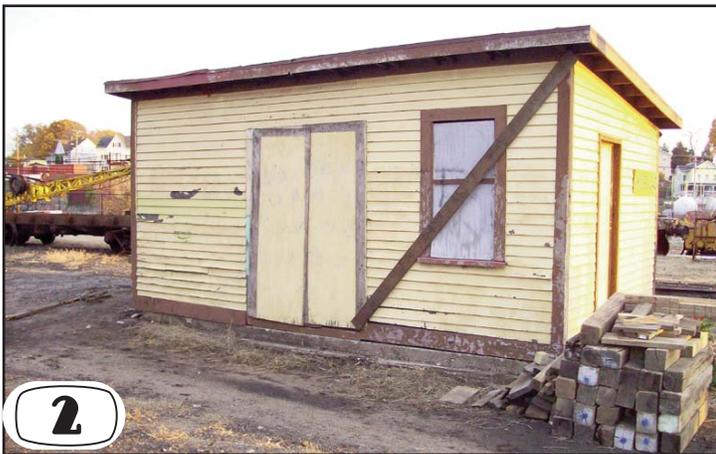
## New Members

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!

Vincent Frisina	Danbury, CT
Ann L. Altro	Danbury, CT
Sandra Starr	Springfield Center, MY
Joan McCabe	Danbury, CT
John Atherton	Poughkeepsie, NY
William Nicholson	Newtown, CT

## Pumphouse Progress

Restored doors have replaced the painted plywood (lower photo taken last fall) on the pumphouse this week. Project Leader John Ivansco and a crew consisting of Bill Britt, Bob Pitcher, Dave McKee, Glenn Miller and Dave Roberts have continued restoration as funds permit. Two of the three windows have been replaced. Painting after preparation, and mounting of a control panel lie ahead. Donations are appreciated.



## Founding of the Danbury Railway Museum

By Stan Madyda

The year 2009 marks the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the formation of the Danbury Railway Museum, but its roots go back even further.

In the 1980s, the Railroad Museum of New England was searching for a larger and permanent home for its growing collection. Danbury became a prime location with its station, freight house and yard, so in 1987 the RMNE approached Danbury with the idea of moving their collection. After receiving a less than enthusiastic response from the city, state and Conrail, they decided to search elsewhere. Common Council members Michael Fazio and Gene Eriquez were appointed to a committee to study the museum idea. Mr. Fazio kept a dialogue going with the RMNE.

Fast forward to 1991. Gene Eriquez was now mayor and Michael Fazio was still on the Common Council. The RMNE again approached Danbury with a plan to create the Danbury Railroad Heritage Park. It would be a multimillion dollar venture that would include moving the RMNE collection, the Guilford signal tower, and a flag stop station from Quinnipiac to Danbury. The existing Union Station and freight house would be utilized and new construction would consist of the roundhouse and shops, storage and display buildings, and a separate building for the Library. The RMNE would also explore operating a tourist train along the Maybrook Line to Brewster. It was hoped that funding would come from corporation sponsorship and the city. The 1991 proposal estimated that attendance would be 100,000 visitors a year.

Over the next two years, negotiations took place with the RMNE, Connecticut Department of Transportation and the city to make the Danbury Railroad Heritage Park a reality. In 1992, the state transferred ownership of the Union Station to the city and plans began to restore it. The RMNE also ran an excursion that May and had a two day railroad event in October to publicize their intentions. However, during a meeting held in March 1993, it was learned that the RMNE was considering an alternative site but was still considering Danbury. The RMNE said that it would need \$5,688,650 to fund their plans if they were to move to Danbury. Other conditions were also presented. Later in the year, alternative ideas were being considered to bring a museum to Danbury with the possibility of RMNE equipment on display.

On February 20, 1994 the Danbury News Times reported that Mayor Eriquez felt the chance of

*Continued on Page 7*

# DRM Express Track

By Ira Pollack, President

In this month's newsletter I'll tell you much is going on both in the yard and in the building.

News from our rail-yard is that the radiator shutter assembly has been finished and installed on the SW8, and the locomotive is back in service. Work is continuing on the pumphouse back in the eastern part of the yard. John Ivansco and crew have been busily restoring the doors and windows of the structure. Eventually this will be incorporated into our Railyard Local tour. Work is also moving along on the NYC wooden caboose. Gerry and his crew are getting ready to install the cupola and new roof. There has been much work behind the scenes this year within the carpenter shop, fabricating the new cupola basically from scratch. Our woodworking crew has rebuilt these parts using the originals as patterns. Very impressive!

Maintenance work also continues with the trackage. With the expertise of Bob Andrews, we have gotten the compressor running, and I have begun tamping the many rail joints to bring them back up to grade. The Ford backhoe experienced major mechanical failure this past month, but now we have expended monies to repair this vital piece of equipment by sending it out to a professional mechanic. Much of our yard work cannot happen without this machine.

In the building, Wade Roesse and the Tuesday night crew have been making great progress with the model layouts, adding something new every week. Wade has figured out a way to bend Plexiglas into a curve, and has displayed some of our models in the area above the 0-gauge layout. This display has also turned into quite an attraction for the Museum.

As we experience our 15 year anniversary, I will talk about some of our early history. Last month I left you with the early days of occupying the station. I had mentioned the "Muffin Lady". Originally the Museum was to share the station with a muffin and coffee shop. Where was this going to go? What would the ovens for the muffins do to our archives? How would this additional business conflict with staffing our Museum? Many questions were raised as to the validity of this idea of a muffin shop within our confines. Fortunately, it never materialized. The original idea was to use what is now our gift shop space for the muffin shop, and in fact the Gift Shop room wasn't written into our lease of the building. I had to petition the city to



revamp our lease agreement several years ago to amend this room into our contract.

The Museum was now in its new building, and work had been done reconfiguring the yard for our use as a museum. A runaround track was built, and new fencing was installed by the state and city. The next obvious step was to begin acquiring equipment to occupy the yard. Through a leasing agreement involving the state DOT, the Housatonic Railroad, and the Museum, we received five passenger cars and a New Haven gondola. Part of the stipulation of receiving these cars was to immediately repaint them. I approached the BOD at the time with a plan to paint



the cars green with gold Danbury Railway Museum lettering above the windows. I believed at the time that as we rolled along Interstate Route 84, it would be good advertising and publicity for the Museum. I also thought that running rights on Track 2 were mere weeks away. Boy was I wrong! We ended up painting the cars, and contracting with a sign company using vinyl letters for both the DRM and Reading lettering for the cars – an amicable compromise!

Many things were going on in these early days of the Museum. We also were in the process of purchasing our first locomotive – the RS1. The engine, purchased from the Green Mountain Railroad, was on its way south and getting closer to Danbury day by day. We sent volunteers to babysit the locomotive as it headed south through some less than desirable areas. Some of our members actually slept in the cab those several evenings of transit.

There was a strong spirit and a momentum with many different things going on at the same time. We suddenly had this before us, and things happened very quickly. We were of the mind to collect everything that we could just to fill this vast empty railyard that was part of the Museum. Some of these were gems, some certainly were not. We did make mistakes in our infancy. Some of these pieces should never have come to the Museum but it was part of our learning curve.

In the next issue I will talk about some of these ventures, or should I say follies. This was our history, good or bad. This is what happened; this is how we grew. See you next month.

## Model A Fords on Tour

On April 18<sup>th</sup> five Model A Fords rested on display outside our Museum while their owners made a tour inside without them. Watch for word about an antique car show here early this fall.



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## Photography and Art Exhibit

### Display by Dan Foley and Harry Burke

The DRM's newest interior exhibit features the photographic talents of Dan Foley and artistic skills of Harry Burke. Both are DRM members. Come take advantage of this limited time opportunity to view these extraordinary photos and pencil renderings of railroad history!

Dan, who hails from a railroading family in Massachusetts, began capturing trains on film in the late 1940's. He gained his 'nom de plume' of "Foleyfotos" as chief photographer for the UMass newspaper, and continues to use it to this day. From then on, wherever he has been, he has been shooting photos of trains. Many have appeared in books, magazines and newspapers over the past 50 years. We are delighted to display "Steam in the '50s and Beyond" which includes many of his favorite photos from his collection of some 30,000 slides and 15,000 negatives.



Harry Burke retired from the Long Island Railroad after 40 years of service and is a second generation railroader. Starting in 1955 as a trainman, he advanced to conductor, freight conductor and then management positions. He has created these detailed pencil drawings from memory and from his vast photo collection. Retirement in 1995 has given him more time to create these authentic sketches of vintage and current scenes of railroading. If you wish to purchase any of those displayed, please call (203)746-1596.

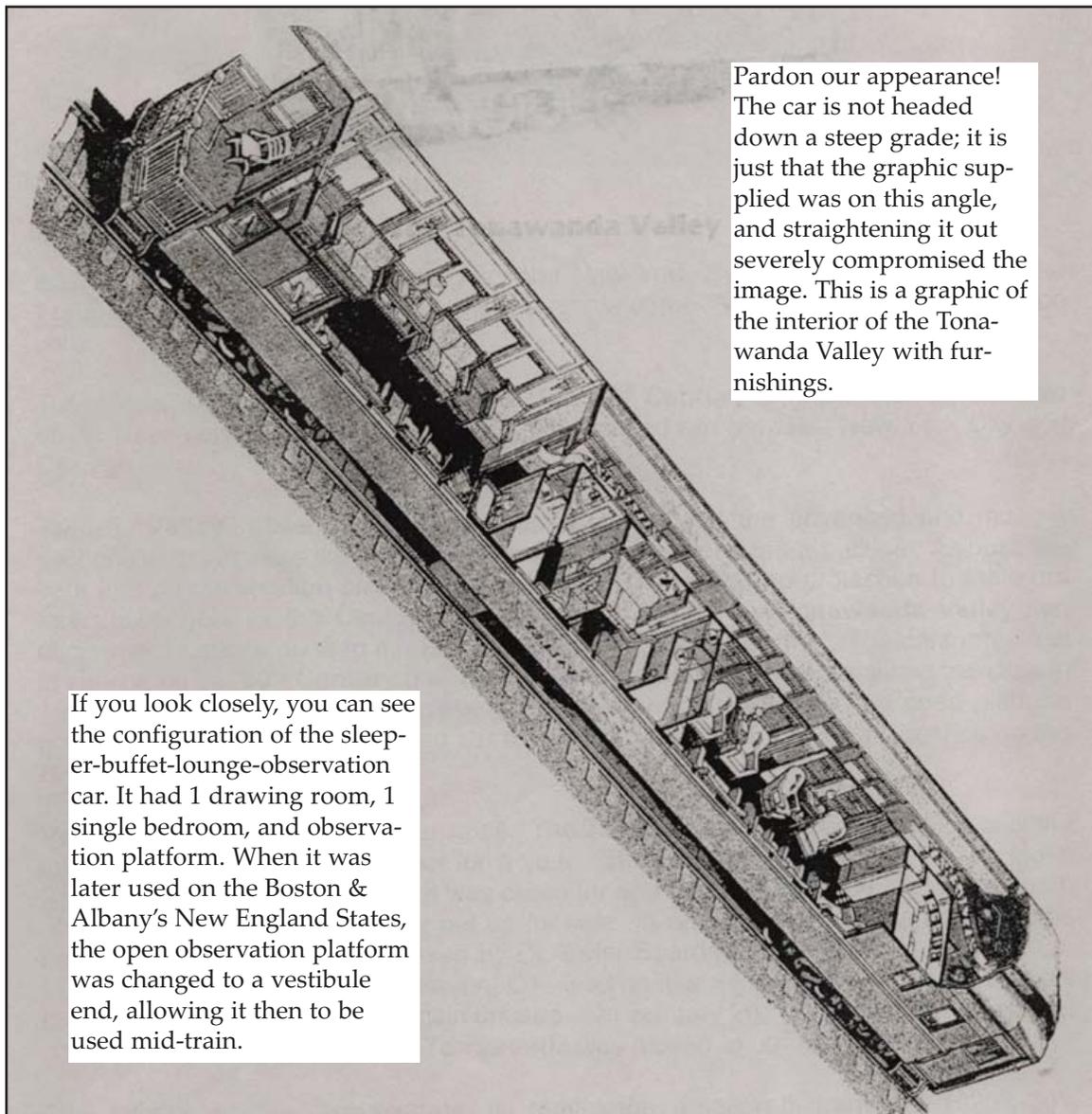


# Tonawanda Valley Restoration in Need of More Funds

This historic piece, built by Pullman in 1928, was recently generously donated to the Museum by Dr. Diana Beardsley. The DRM is now in the position to begin preservation and restoration of this sole remaining example of the "Valley" series of observation cars. Originally built with a six-foot deep observaton platform, it was used as the last car in the consist of the Twentieth Century Limited, the New York Central's luxury flagship train between New York City and Chicago.

Although the car underwent some modifications in 1932, including the addition of air conditioning, enough of the interior decor remains as a foundaton for a beautiful restoration.

The car traveled as part of the Twentieth Century Limited consist until 1938, when streamlined trainsets replaced it. It then remained in service with the Boston & Albany until the late 1950's. After being stored by Pullman for a year, it was sold to Crown Metal Products of Wyano, PA and used as an office until the death of the company president. After sale to a private owner, it was moved to other areas in Connecticut, and eventually to Danbury Railway Museum in 1998. Late last year a new owner donated the car to the Museum, so now the preservation and restoration can begin!



Pardon our appearance! The car is not headed down a steep grade; it is just that the graphic supplied was on this angle, and straightening it out severely compromised the image. This is a graphic of the interior of the Tonawanda Valley with furnishings.

If you look closely, you can see the configuration of the sleeper-buffet-lounge-observation car. It had 1 drawing room, 1 single bedroom, and observation platform. When it was later used on the Boston & Albany's New England States, the open observation platform was changed to a vestibule end, allowing it then to be used mid-train.

Project leader Bill Britt indicates that more funds are needed before preparation work, then a stairway can be built and affixed to the lead end of the car. We have received some very generous donations, but more is needed before this work can proceed. That is a beginning step in restoring this piece to its previous grandeur. Please address donations to Danbury Railway Museum, Tonawanda Valley Fund, Box 90, Danbury, CT 06813-0090. The DRM is a non-profit corporation; all donations are tax-deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law.

Thanks goes to Roberta Ballard for much of the information included in this article.

# DRM Hosted Two Large Railroading Groups on May 16<sup>th</sup>

The morning began with a scheduled business meeting then presentations by the Metro-North Division of the National Model Railroad Association (NMRA). Rick Abramson, Peter Ness, and John Richards utilized our Wednesday night program area for their presentations. All three will be giving presentations at the NMRA's National Convention in Hartford, CT between July 5-11, 2009. John Richard's display, pictured below, illustrates his topic of "GIPX: Realistic Windows and Interiors for Buildings", and attracted quite a crowd afterward. He did the lighting and buildings; Dave Kotsonis and Harry Thayer set up the town. Two DRM members, President Ira Pollack, and Dave McKee, graciously opened their homes for tours of their layouts. This same organization has scheduled a Prototype Tour to the DRM on Wednesday morning, July 8<sup>th</sup>.



The afternoon brought the anticipated arrival of passengers on the "Housatonic Flyer", who taking a rare mileage trip which originated in Canaan, CT. that was sponsored by the Massachusetts Bay Railroad Enthusiasts. It was carried out in conjunction with the Berkshire Scenic Railway Museum and Housatonic Railroad Company, with Danbury as its destination point. All of the passengers were given a comprehensive booklet detailing sights along the trip. Also included was information about the Housatonic Railroad Company, Housatonic Railroad, Berkshire Scenic, and Danbury Railway Museum. Due to the length of the train journey, our guests had a very limited time at the DRM but seemed to make the most of it. We certainly loved introducing our Museum to them, and hope to welcome each of them back in the future.



May 16<sup>th</sup> was a wonderfully busy day at the Museum. Patty reports that Gift Shop sales for the day were very brisk.



# New, Creative Yard Exhibits

## Garden of railroad art growing this spring

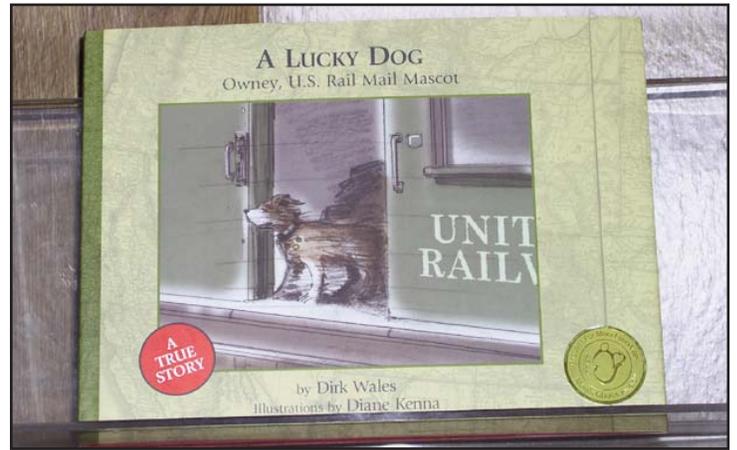
One corner of our railyard has blossomed into a beautiful attraction thanks to the creative talents of Ira Pollack and Jeremy Rice. In DRM President Ira Pollack's exhibit, "The Insulator Garden", various types of railroad insulators are attached to painted rebar stems to look very much like colorful flowers. Jeremy used his welding skills and imagination to fashion little pink pigs from metal railroad scraps. Combined with the live plants which we added a year ago, these exhibits are exciting and attractive eye-catchers.



# Gift Shop News

By Patty Osmer

One of the most popular children's books in the Gift Shop is *A Lucky Dog: Owney, U.S. Rail Mail Mascot* by Kirk Wales. Owney WAS a lucky dog! This mutt, found curled up in the mailbags at the Albany, NY Post Office was "adopted" by the mail clerks, and soon was traveling across the country by train with the mail. His travels included visits to Alaska, Canada, Mexico, China, Algiers, the Azores, and Japan, traveling over 143,000 miles in all. Along the way, he collected over 1,000 mail tags, hotel key checks, notes, badges, and trinkets which documented his travels around the United States, all of which were fastened to his jacket at one time or another. When Owney died in 1897, he was preserved, and is now on exhibit at the Smithsonian Institute's National Post Office Museum.



This is a great book for children of all ages, and makes a very nice gift. Members can obtain a copy of this book for \$14.35 at the Museum Gift Shop.

Take a look at New York Central steam power on main lines and branches in our new book, *New York Central Steam Power in the Empire State*. This book features 91 premium



black and white photos from Ed May's steam collection, along with 10 maps and information regarding NYC's operations in New York State. It was researched and written by Richard L. Stoving, has 80 pages, and a member price of \$22.50.

## Founding of the Danbury Railway Museum,

*Continued from Page 2*

the RMNE moving to Danbury was "highly unlikely." Within days, a new proposal put forward by Peter Cornwall, John Flower and other members of the WestConn Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society, was on the mayor's desk.

Sources: Material from the John Flower Collection, the Charlie Bardo Collection and the Danbury News Times 9/29/91 and 2/20/94.

Next installment: The DRM takes shape.



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## MUSEUM CALENDAR

June	17(7:30pm)	Slides; New England - Gary Gurske
June	18(7:00pm)	Board Meeting - Open to Members
June	24(7:30pm)	Modeling: Kitbashing & Scratch building - Wade Roesse
July	1(7:30pm)	Slides; CNJ - Pete Brill
July	8(7:30pm)	Midwest in 1980's - Alan Baker
July	15(7:30pm)	His Selected Slides - PeteMcLachlan

**Museum hours: Monday-Saturday 10-5pm; Sunday 12-5pm**  
See the newsletter in color at [www.danbury.org/drm!](http://www.danbury.org/drm!)



## Contact Information

Please contact us with submissions:

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### Change of Address

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Attention: Membership Chairman  
PO Box 90, Danbury, CT 06813  
Via Email to [drmmembers@aol.com](mailto:drmmembers@aol.com)

