



## **MRHS MAINLINE**

The Official Newsletter of the  
Muskegon Railroad Historical Society  
Volume 20, Issue 8: August 2005

### ***SPECIAL AUGUST GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING AUGUST 2, 2005: SPECIAL TIME: 6:00 WITH DEPARTURE AT 6:45 PM***

Normally the club hosts a picnic for members in August, but this year there is SOMETHING SPECIAL!! This year, we have scheduled a charter train ride on the ***COOPERSVILLE AND MARNE RAILROAD!***

It will include the famous HOBO BINDLE meal, and includes a souvenir of the RR!

At the extremely low price of only \$6.00 per person, you will get a train ride and a meal! We will be riding in the "premium car" with air conditioning and tables at no extra cost to us. It seats 42 passengers, but if we have more the CMRR will bring the cabooses for additional seating. Plan on being in Coopersville no later than 6:00 PM for a departure time of 6:45 PM. We will have a tour of the facilities if you arrive earlier. The ride is about one hour long.

If you would like to ride with someone else from Muskegon to Coopersville to save gas, we will have car pooling from our club location at 5:30 PM. We have two vans currently able to carry 10 others. If you can drive others please offer.

Because of the meal and seating we request you RSVP ASAP to Tom Anderson no later than Sunday July 31<sup>st</sup>. This will allow the CMRR to plan and prepare the meals. Call Tom at: 773-6411 during the day and at 744-9782 in the evening.

If you would like more information about the Coopersville and Marne Railroad, view their web site at:  
[www.coopersvilleandmarne.org](http://www.coopersvilleandmarne.org)

#### ***Making Tracks for Muskegon By George D. Parrish "Access: The Key to Muskegon County Small Business" May 1996***

The lumbering boom came to Muskegon so suddenly that it arrived far ahead of adequate transportation. In 1850, a stagecoach trip between Muskegon and Ravenna still required an entire day. By 1859, a trip by stage between Muskegon and Ferrysburg took only three and a half hours (for the cost of a dollar) but there had to be a better way.

Then railroad fever hit West Michigan. In 1869, F.A. Nims, Lyman C. Mason, Major C. Davis, R.S. Sanford, A. Rogers, and others formed the Muskegon and Ferrysburg Railroad Company to replace the stage. By January of 1870, trains were running on a regular schedule. In that same year, W.S. Gerrish introduced the narrow gauge railroad to the logging industry in Muskegon. It was a major improvement over iced roads and high-wheeled drags the lumber industry until then employed.

The Muskegon and Ferrysburg line almost immediately merged with lines connecting Grand Haven, Holland, and Allegan. The combination, which was first called the Michigan Lake Shore Railroad and next called the Grand Haven Railroad, was absorbed by the Chicago and West Michigan Line in 1881. A decade later the line

would be extended to the Lake Harbor resort.

Meanwhile, another group in 1886 built a line to connect with the Toledo, Ann Arbor, and Northern Michigan line. That was the birth of the Toledo, Saginaw, and Muskegon company. It was absorbed by the Grand Trunk system shortly after completion in 1887.

It was about this same time that L.N. Keating and Newcomb McGraft, who had been working for several years to start another line, were joined by W.O. Hughart, W.R. Shelby, and T.J. O'Brian of Grand Rapids, to form the Muskegon, Grand Rapids, and Indiana railroad company. The line operated successfully until 1896 when it was absorbed by the Pennsylvania system.

The Union Depot was built in 1894 at Sixth Street and Western Avenue, and five years later the Chicago and West Michigan became part of the Pere Marquette Railroad system.

The Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad was operating the old Union Depot when Muskegon men enlisted for service in WWI between 1914 and 1917. Today, the old depot has a new life as Muskegon's tourist bureau.

Rail transportation also developed with the city of Muskegon. In 1882, horses and mules were pulling streetcars along three and one half miles of track within the city until they were finally replaced by electric cars in 1890.

Streetcars were an interesting lot. They had a schedule to keep and sometimes

disrupted parades and other street festivals.

On August 6, 1919, the Muskegon Traction and Lighting Company raised the streetcar fare from six to seven cents. The result was a riot that involved thousands of people and destroyed at least sixteen cars and other company property. There was one death.

The erosion of revenue due to the automobile continued, and the company discontinued service October 19, 1929, and sold or scrapped the equipment. Just three years earlier the Interurban ceased carrying passengers and freight between Grand Rapids, Grand Haven, and Muskegon. The brief age of railway dominance in Muskegon was ending.

#### ***Nomination Committee Nominations for Vice President and At Large Board of Director***

At the September 2005 General Membership Meeting, elections will be held to elect a vice president and an at large director. Nominations are due by August 16<sup>th</sup> for publication in the newsletter that will be printed August 23. If you or someone you know will help lead the club for all members, please let a current board member know. Also, plan on being at the General Membership Meeting September 6<sup>th</sup> for the election.



**Prez Sez**  
**By President Thomas Anderson**

We can only report on our regular meeting this month as this article is due before our postponed board meeting. Seems our meetings were changed to a week later each so we could find parking places and not walk a mile because of the Muskegon Summer Celebration. We did have members enjoying the layouts during the festival and because of that they welcomed guests that found us that were totally enthralled with our facilities and layouts.

You can tell it's the warm summer months as our turnout for the meetings is a bit down, but all there enjoyed the program about Steam on the Ohio Central, by Jim Funnell.

The "O" scale is 'running great'; the "HO" is 'no problem', looking for layout chair;" to the "N" scale is 'Naughty and Nice!' Progress is being made in the building and volunteers are always welcome to help. The library has 'not much to report'. We now have forms to copy for our club owned inventory out on loan about the community and will be working on those soon. The Fall Train Show is coming along with vendors signing up. Save that date of Sept. 25<sup>th</sup> to help out.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> we presented a program for the Muskegon LIONS CLUB and they followed that by coming up to see our great facilities and layouts. The next day we had a large group of children attend after participating in a train program at the Hackley Public Library. Our secret site is becoming well known.

We now have cards (postcard size) showing our location and with information about the MRHS printed on the back. These are available to all to help promote our organization and sign new members. They are available at the club.

Currently five members have expressed an interest in filling the vacancies on the board and the election will take place at out Sept. Meeting. On August 6<sup>th</sup>, Don Pratt will be conducting a Scout Merit Badge Program from 2 PM to 4 PM. It's a great way to build the love of trains. Be there to run the layouts and help him out. Remember, we are here because of our interest in TRAINS. Invite your friend to join us also.

**Prez Tom**

**Muskegon Area Rail News:**  
**Two CSX Michigan lines for sale**  
**From the Web Site:**  
**www.nationalcorridors.org**

CSX employees along two rail lines are getting ready for big changes, reports *The Grand Rapids Press* in Michigan of June 28. The lines – one from Grand Rapids to Ludington and another from West Olive to Fremont – are for sale. Deals appear to be in the works for both, although nothing is final.

Both subdivisions comprise 175 of the 812 miles of track that CSX, a Jacksonville, Fla.-based railroad, operates in the state.

Under deals yet to be negotiated, Marquette Rail Corp. is expected to pick up the Ludington sub, 127 miles of track going north from Grand Rapids to Ludington and Manistee.

Marquette, a partnership of Progressive Rail Corp., Lake States Ry., Farm Rail Systems and TranSolutions, Inc., will own the tracks, but lease the land from CSX. In a separate arrangement with CSX, Michigan Shore Railroad is expected to lease both land and tracks on the Fremont sub – 48 miles stretching from West Olive to Fremont.

Steve Kauffman, chairman of United Transportation Union Local 1765, sent a letter to CSX employees letting them know about the proposed sale.

He said CSX employees won't lose jobs, but will have to "follow the work."

Employees might be able to find CSX jobs as close as Grand Rapids, or they could have to move out of state, to areas such as Cincinnati or East St. Louis, Ill.

"Our jobs are being outsourced," Kauffman said. "They may not be outsourced overseas, but they're at least being outsourced to another company." Kauffman has been a conductor and yard foreman with CSX in Ludington for 40 years.

He said employees are not bitter about the change, just disappointed they will have to uproot.

"They know that there's going to be a job somewhere for them on CSX," he said.

"It's just going to be somewhat of an inconvenience for them to move."

Michigan Shore Railroad bid on the Ludington sub and another line on the east side of the state, in addition to the Fremont sub.

Mike Bobic is manager of marketing and sales for Rail America, the Boca Raton, Fla.-based firm that owns Michigan Shore. He says the company has been told unofficially it will get the Fremont sub.

"That was probably the least desirable of the three we were bidding on, because we handle a good percentage of the traffic on that line anyway," Bobic said.

CSX is shedding the lines as part of a larger program to redistribute its resources, said Kim Skorniak, a spokeswoman for the rail carrier.

CSX employs 1,149 in Michigan and ships 186,000 carloads on state tracks annually.

**Member News and Donations to the Club**

Andy and Jim have been working at reorganizing the library. They have sorted and organized large amounts of local railroad history information and have placed the items in organized binders. Make sure you utilize your membership and take advantage of our library.

Jim is cleaning out the unfinished back room. There are numerous sheets of plywood and are of no use to the club. Some of this plywood was previously used for layout boards. If you are interested in any of the plywood, contact Jim. The wood is available for free to members.

**Calendar of Events**

- Tuesday, August 2, 2005)
  - MRHS General Member Meeting
  - Take a Ride on the Coopersville and Marne Railroad
- August 12 and 13, 2005
  - Coopersville & Marne Railroad Summerfest Train Excursions
- Tuesday, August 15, 2005
  - MRHS Board Meeting
- Tuesday, September 6, 2005
  - MRHS General Member Meeting
  - Election of Vice President and Director
- Tuesday, September 20, 2005
  - MRHS General Membership Meeting
- Sunday, September 25, 2005
  - MRHS Fall Train Show!
  - Plan now to help out!

Every Tuesday and Saturday the Club is Open! Stop by and Enjoy!

**DUES...DUES...DUES**

Discounts, Library Access, Layout Access to name a few...

Get your dues in so you don't loose these privileges of membership.

If you have a check mark by your name on the envelope, your dues **have not been** paid

**Individual Membership:**

**\$20/Year**

**Family Membership:**

**\$30/Year**

**MRHS Officers**

- President: Tom Anderson H: 744-9782 W: 773-6411
- V. Pres: Vacant
- Treasurer: Andy Busard 755-6298
- Secretary: Thomas Van Bruggen 767-8177
- Director: Vacant
- Director: Kent McFaden 726-2606
- Director: Jim Funnell 744-1979

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