



# MRHS MAINLINE

The Official Newsletter of the  
Muskegon Railroad Historical Society  
Volume 21, Issue 6: June 2006

## *Car Ferry Railroad...*

### *Part 2*

*By Jerry Tyler*

Loading the car ferry could have its headaches, too with the low water levels. Sometimes the couplings would slide on top of one another. Car men would have to jack up the car in order to release the couplings. This could be a danger also, as they were working in a down grade condition. When bad weather was expected on the Big Lake and the freight cars were being loaded onto the ship, the last car coming in contact with the bumping block, the engineer was signaled to keep the slack bunched and to hold it there until the deckhands could secure the cars with jacks, chains and wheel chucks. This was to prevent any movement of the cars on their journey across the lake. When loading took place the ship's twin screw turned in reverse to keep pressure against the slip.

Winter at the car ferrys was something else! I have been at the docks when it was so snowy and blowing so hard that when the headpin, (switchman) who was just ahead of the engine, the glow from his lantern was just barely visible from the cab. There were three switchmen relaying signals from the ground to the engineer. At times everything would come to an absolute halt due to whiteouts and visibility was zero. Two way radios had not yet been adopted on the GTW. I've seen these poor guys many a night come on board frozen stiff. Their eyebrows, eyelashes, and if they had a beard or mustache, were full of icicles. I remember one switchman, George Beckley, when he'd come up into the engine, he'd catch me off guard, and run his icy cold hands down the back of my neck.

Inside the cab during these wintry nights you would find two or three extra batteries on the dripper to keep them warm because battery life was short in cold temperatures.

### **June Meeting Program**

**"Alaska-Yukon Railroad Adventure"... a video program supplied by Fred Wilder**

**Watch it on the new MRHS large screen video projection system!**

**Tuesday, June 6, 2006  
7:00 PM  
Don't Miss It!**

The dripper was a place on the back head of the boiler where the oil cans were stored.

For the engine crews during the wintertime at the docks it was quite cozy. I would have all the draw curtains pulled across the gangway and interior of the cab. Sometimes I'd have the tarp pulled over the coal bunker. If you've ever tried to shovel coal and had the ice and snow imbedded into the coal pile, frozen, you'd better start thinking about getting out your coal pick. I remember when we were right next to Muskegon Lake and there would be a strong easterly wind coming across Muskegon Lake, the cab windows would rattle and bang with snow blowing in between the sliding window. I've experienced it so cold that even on the inside of the cab there would be a few cab bolts white with frost. Actually, it was quite comfortable in

### **Calendar of Events**

Thursday, June 1, 2006 9:30 AM  
Points for Profit Mini Trade Fair  
Theme: TBA  
Tuesday, June 6, 2006 7:00 PM  
MRHS General Membership Mtg.  
Tuesday, June 20, 2006 7:00 PM  
MRHS Board Meeting  
Friday, June 30, 2006 through  
Sunday, July 9, 2006  
Muskegon Summer Celebration  
Tuesday, July 11, 2006 7:00 PM  
MRHS General Membership Mtg.  
**NOTE DATE CHANGE!**  
Tuesday, July 18, 2006  
MRHS Board Meeting  
Friday, July 28, 2006  
MRHS hosts the Muskegon  
Party in the Park!

the cab. I would crack the firebox door open and with our broom handle I would put it into one of the draft holes of the firebox door and wedge the broom part against the curtain. This was to keep the curtain a safe distance back from being scorched. At the car ferry dock with such slow speeds you did not have the heat penetrating out of the firebox like it would be when an engine was working hard.

While working the docks this was a perfect time for the engineer and fireman to have a cup of coffee. If you placed your thermos bottle against the boiler it aided in keeping the contents warm. I remember my engineer saying once, "Aren't you glad you hired out in engine service and not have to be on the ground like those poor fellows".

There was a very long, steep grade between the Henry Street Yard and the Ferry docks called the 'Hill'. On a good many winter nights before we would move our train up the hill to the Henry Street Yard we would take the engine and break a path half way up the hill, then return to tie onto our cars. Before returning to the docks to pick up our train, I would grab a flare (Fusee) and a hammer, make my way down to the ground and begin heating and pounding the sand pipes which emitted sand to the rail for better traction. The pipes would be clogged with snow, and heating them up with the flare and at the same time using the hammer to pound on the pipes, the sand would start to trickle down. This was done on both the right and left side of the locomotive. Then on our return trip to the docks the engineer would open up his sanding valve, spreading sand to the rail for our return trip.

### ***To Be Continued...***

***Now in its second month, this article will span several months, and we thank Jerry for this wonderful contribution!***



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

The year is almost half over and we are still having fun at the MRHS! We know that the upcoming warm summer days and nights take a toll on members showing up at the layouts and meetings, but we are always here for all!

We have scheduled the first Tuesday in August for our social, again to be on the FAMOUS CMRR in Coopersville! We had a great time and great turnout in '05 and are planning for the same this year. The May meeting had a great DVD on 'Extreme Steam' and it was exciting to see the shots of those "BIG BOYS" as the huge engines of the past pulled their massive loads.

Again the layouts are running fine! to OK - no problems, holding its own, 'tis fine, to still there!

After the HO committee meeting of May 6<sup>th</sup> the back room was attacked and good progress has been made in getting rid of some of the not needed stuff and junk. The HO committee meeting was down in attendance this month but we hope it was because of forgetfulness and not lack of commitment. Big plans are in the works to redo that layout if the commitment is there and the use of the building for long term can be secured with the Heritage Association. Members have great plans and ideas for the big change!

The Points for Profit program has the MRHS receiving almost \$300.00 for our program year end share. Not bad for the limited efforts collecting receipts and only a few members really getting involved and representing the MRHS at the mini trade fairs. You too can attend and help us earn additional points which add up to \$.

The Party in the Park now has a committee who will be asking all to work that evening and have FUN! Mark the evening of July 28<sup>th</sup> on your calendar now! Members of the Muskegon Heritage Association and the Milwaukee Clipper have already volunteered to help us and share in the

good time!  
 Your Board of Directors passed the resolution necessary for us to obtain the special liquor license at the last board meeting and we have the band "Weezil Malone" from Grand Rapids scheduled to play.

The purchase of most of the video project system has been made and will be in use soon. This system was purchased by proceeds from the sale of a donation to the MRHS of HO setup. Ken Kadrovich managed to get the rolls donated for our last meeting from Goobers Bakery, and they hit the spot! Thanks Ken.

The public continues to come and visit the club on Saturdays, looking to enjoy the fun with us, so please come up and help run the trains for them. They are all potential members!

And it was mentioned that the high price of gas has the Chicago South Shore Lines packed! Too bad West Michigan no longer has local rail

transportation.  
 Make sure to come up for the June meeting and may all your switches be for you,

**Prez, Tom**

**Member News and Donations**

The Board of Directors has authorized Kent McFaden, Andy Busard, and Jim Funnell to work with the Muskegon Heritage Association to hopefully secure a long term agreement for our utilization of the facilities. We have invested a great deal into the building, and have plans to invest further, so your board feels we need to secure a longer term agreement. We'll keep you posted as things develop.

The library will be acquiring several new books via donations, and the new Rail Video Quarterly has been inventoried and is available. Check out these new additions to the library!

**Friday, July 28, 2006**  
**MRHS Hosts the Muskegon Party in the Park!**

We need your help. Sign up today to help us host the Party in the Park. It is a great fundraiser for the MRHS, and it is a fun and easy night of work, if you even call it work! See Tom Anderson for or Andy Busard for more details!

**Articles Requested for the MRHS Mainline Newsletter**

It appears here often, but I am continually in need of articles for the newsletter. If you have articles or information to share, please submit them to the secretary/editor for inclusion in the newsletter. Please share your knowledge.

**Points for Profit Program**  
**List of Participating Businesses**  
**Look for special point bonus programs inserted with your newsletter!**

- ACN- American Communications Network
  - Advanced Hearing, Inc.
  - Albertson's Supermarket
  - Auction-it Today
  - Baglien and Associates Realtors
  - Bolema Home Center and Rentals
  - Carnival Cruise Lines
  - Chevron Gasoline Stations
  - Cool Stuff
  - Dr. James Donley Laser and Family Dentistry
  - Frauenthal Center for the Performing Arts
  - Go Gear
  - Home Interiors by Barb Sidock
  - Investment & Retirement Consulting
  - Kaat's Culligan Water Conditioning
  - Lakeshore Chrysler-Jeep-Dodge
  - Little Caesars Pizza
  - LowCarb Specialties, Inc.
  - Mary Kay- Laura Ecker
  - Melaleuca- The Wellness Company
  - Michigan's Adventure
  - Mr. Rooter Plumbing
  - Muskegon Brake
  - North Muskegon Eye Care
  - O'Brien Family Chiropractic Center
  - Perkins Restaurant & Bakery
  - Pre-Paid Legal
  - Pre-Paid Legal Services
  - PromoRomo Marketing
  - Runnigfish Web Design
  - Republic Bank
  - Savon Pharmacy
  - Shoreline Insurance
  - Skinsations by Colly Travis
  - Studio Creations of America
  - Tupperware by Cathy Cook
  - The Tux Shop
  - Van's Car Wash & Quick Lube
- Visit [www.pointsforprofit.com](http://www.pointsforprofit.com) for more information

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**Individual Membership:**  
**\$20/Year**  
**Family Membership:**  
**\$30/Year**

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