



MRHS MAINLINE

The Official Newsletter of the
Muskegon Railroad Historical Society
Volume 21, Issue 7: July 2006

Car Ferry Railroad... ***Part 3*** ***By Jerry Tyler***

I've experienced times when the snow was so deep that we would take just half of our train up the hill and come back later for the other half. Most people have no idea of how snow reacts on a flanged wheel. It can actually act as a brake because the flange must make its own path thru the snow.

I've seen freight car wheels after sitting out in the cold for a long period of time in low temperatures that the oil in the journals got so cold that the car wheels would actually slide for a distance before turning. This was with the old friction type journal bearings.

In the winter months when navigation was closed on the St. Lawrence Seaway (not including GTW ships) there were a lot of CN yellow door boxcars which contained newsprint that were first class merchandise and heavy. These were all headed west to be loaded onto the car ferrys. These cars were selected to be on the move over everything else.

On the other hand, in the fall of the year we would get several cars of grain from the wheat belt that were headed east. I can remember many times when our conductor, Ray Boomer, would come up into the cab and tell me, "You'd better get a good fire in there tonight. We've got a lot of heavy cars of grain." With this engineer I fired for, I like him a lot and learned a lot, but he never had any mercy on the locomotive or his fireman. I never really got a chance to take in the scenery going up the hill because he had my ass right on the deck right

July Meeting Program

**Take a Ride on the
PIKES PEAK RAILROAD
A Video Presentation**

**NOTE MEETING DATE
CHANGE...**

Tuesday, July 11, 2006

7:00 PM

Don't Miss It!

from the docks to the Henry Street Yard Office shoveling coal.

This job I worked was a seven-day-a-week job and at times lots of overtime. I can remember on a couple of occasions that there were refrigerator cars that were low on ice and these cars were also hot merchandise that contained meat or some sort of perishables. Let it be one car or two cars, we would take these cars from the Henry Street Yard to the Mart Dock where they had an icing facility. We would spot the cars under the wood canopy... The personnel who ran the ice house would drop a plank to the car's roof, and open up the ice hatches. There was a big door they opened that started the huge hunks of ice on their way down the ice run to fill the ice bunkers in the cars. These bunkers were loaded at both ends of the refrigerator car. After this was completed we would make our way back up to Henry Street, where they would actually hold #514 for our return so the refrigerator cars could be included in the train consist. In later years there was a service truck loaded with huge chunks of ice that came right up to the Henry Street Yard to re-ice the refrigerator cars. This was a truck with a scissor jack that the

operator could go to the roof top of the refrigerator car and had access to the ice bunker hatches and load ice into the cars ice bunkers. I can also remember refrigerator cars with charcoal heaters coming thru in the winter time heading east or west loaded with pharmaceutical supplies or beer. It was the yard clerk's job to service these heater units. To check these heaters the ice hatch had to be open and you had to go inside and service the heaters. This was always a two-man operation because of the charcoal fumes involved. If one was overcome by fumes the other could go for help.

Only one man inside at a time.

No two-way radio communications at this time.

Another note of interest: Many times there would be a tank car of gasoline headed for Grand Rapids. It was an ICC ruling that gasoline or any combustion able material including dynamite had to be four cars in back of the locomotive which were called "cover cars." This also applied to the cabooses. No explosives or gasoline next to the caboose. This rule did not apply in yard service. I remember one incident when we picked up a car of gasoline from the Old Dutch Refinery and made our way back to the Henry Street Yard. Upon arrival it was discovered that the 'stop plug' (cap) on the bottom of the tank was not fully tightened. The car had been leaking gasoline for the last 15 miles. What an explosion this would have been if the right conditions had been present.

The Muskegon Railroad Historical Society Presents...

Party in the Park
With Blues Band Weezil Malone!
July 28, 2006

We need your help by volunteering your time and a little bit of effort that evening. This event is a wonderful fundraiser for our society, but with all good things, it takes a bit of work. The more help we have, the easier the work. We are REQUIRED to provide a list of volunteer's names to the City of Muskegon prior to the party, so please let us know if you can help.

Call the club at (231) 726-3657, or contact any member of the Board and let us know the names of you and your friends/family that will help us in the following areas and for which shift (4:45 to 7:00 pm or 6:45 pm to 9:00 pm)

SET UP (BEGINNING AT 2:00 PM), 3RD STREET ID CHECK, 4TH STREET ID CHECK, INFORMATION TENT, TICKET TABLES AT 3RD STREET, TICKET TABLES AT 4TH STREET, POP SERVERS, IMPORT BEER TENT, TEAR DOWN, BEER STATION ONE, BEER STATION TWO, TRASH COLLECTION, AND ROVER





Car Ferry Railroading... Continued

One night during the winter we were waiting in the yard for a boat to show up. This waiting is what a railroad man calls 'spot time'. In other words, there was nothing to do except wait. So we made our way into the yard office. The ships were equipped with ship-to-shore phones. And after a bit of hackling, telling stories, the yard office phone rang. I don't remember which pursuer or ship it was coming from, but Bob Cross, the yard clerk, answered the phone. They said they were stuck in an ice floe and were up around the Pentwater area. They did not know when they would be arriving in port.

Another incident the pursuer called in and said they were in 18 foot of slush ice. The going was very difficult and would be arriving as soon as conditions permitted. Many times we would be waiting at the car ferry dock for a ship to come in. This is when the Grand Rapids was tied up along side the dock. We had often been invited aboard for a snack. A snack generally ended up being a full course meal. Those sailors sure had good food. The table was set pretty much like a buffet around the clock with so many crews coming on and off duty. A regular crew, I am told, for the ships was 34 men. Another incident the pursuer called in and said they were in 18 foot of slush ice. The going was very difficult and would be arriving as soon as conditions permitted. Many times we would be waiting at the car ferry dock for a ship to come in. This is when the Grand Rapids was tied up along side the dock. We had often been invited aboard for a snack. A snack generally ended up being a full course meal. Those sailors sure had good food. The table was set pretty much like a buffet around the clock with so many crews coming on and off duty. A regular crew, I am told, for the ships was 34 men.

To Be Continued...

**Prez Sez
By President Thomas Anderson**

We thank Fred Wilder for his video on the ALASKA - YUKON RAILROAD ADVENTURE presented at the June General Membership Meeting. The video was great train stuff, and we were able to watch it with our new video projection system! The new system provides a big screen with very clear pictures and audio equipment donated by Tom Van Bruggen and Steve Bowyer provides us with a better sound! Come and enjoy future programs.

The layout reports highlighted several areas of interest. Kent is working in the 'O' gauge layout area, cleaning out the clutter under the layout. In the process, the C&O train set donated by Bob Kersch was found. We had thought it was missing. Maybe we should clean up more often! Kent hopes to make the layout more presentable to visitors. The 'HO' scale layout has some problems with only one line running, maybe two, and the other. (Editors Note: Steve Bowyer and Tom Van Bruggen have identified that several switches have been broken and need to be replaces, causing the tracks not to work.) The 'N' gauge layout is 'wonderful' but a small problem at the crossover switch was noted.

Our July meeting has been moved to the 11th to avoid the crowds and lack of parking during the Summer Celebration. On the 10th of July the club will be hosting a group of kids from the Muskegon Public Library reading program as they learn about and see trains. The visit will be at 7:30 pm, so please come on up and help run the layouts.

Noel Black has donated a beautiful hand built wooden train set. The set is now in the clubs hands with the intent of displaying it in the depot (CVB). Some of the models may also end up at our location, depending on space at the depot. The GTW Historical Society is looking for a place to store their archives, and we

are communicating with them as to using our facilities to house their materials. We will then be able to use their material for reference. The board also voted to become a member of their organization.

Now for the fun part! We are asking that each and every member help out at our Party in the Park on July 28th. You can invite all your friends to come and help too. This is a great fundraiser for us, and the Party provides a fun event for the community to enjoy downtown Muskegon. See the sign up details earlier in the newsletter, and come help the club by enjoying a great evening.

Prez, Tom

**Member News and Donations
Donations:**

Thomas Van Bruggen donated the Stereo Tuner and Cabinet for the Video Projection System. Steve Bowyer donated the speakers for the system. Noel Black has donated a beautiful hand built wooden train set, including several trestles.

**Points For Profit
Program Update!**

The inaugural year of the Points for Profit Program is concluding during the first part of July. Bring in your last receipts ASAP so we can get credit, and look for more details on the continuation of the program coming up. The closing trade fair is scheduled for Thursday, July 6th at the Frauenthal Center. Join us for the bonus points!

**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.

Calendar of Events

- Friday, June 30, 2006 through Sunday, July 9, 2006
Muskegon Summer Celebration
- Monday, July 10, 2006 7:30 PM
Hackley Library Kids Reading Club Visit to the MRHS
- 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!
- Tuesday, August 1, 2006
MRHS Annual Picnic
Watch for Details Coming Soon!
- Tuesday, August 15, 2006 7:00 PM
MRHS Board Meeting

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 for 2006

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

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