



THE

Boston & Maine Railroad Historical Society
Incorporated

NEWSLETTER

“Every foot of track on the B&M, mainline or branch, rain or shine, was the scene of legitimate human endeavor.”
– Robert W. Jones, “Boston and Maine: Three Colorful Decades of New England Railroading.”

March-April 2023

Meeting/Membership Telephone Number (978) 454-3600

www.bmrrhs.org

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*B&M RDC-1 6143 makes a station stop at Reading, MA in 1971.
Tom Nelligan photo, gift of Mary Ann Nelligan. B&MRRHS Cat. No. 2022.47.1.*

TIMETABLE OF UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday, March 11:

B&MRRHS Monthly Public Meeting

Roger’s Hall, 196 Rogers St, Lowell, MA 01852. 3:00 PM.
Peter Violette will present on the ongoing restoration of Maine
Central 4-6-2 steam locomotive #470.

Saturday, April 8:

B&MRRHS Monthly Public Meeting

Roger’s Hall, 196 Rogers St, Lowell, MA 01852. 3:00 PM.
Keolis dispatcher Nathaniel Hurst will present on his career
and experience dispatching former B&M commuter territory.

Sunday, April 23

Hooksett Lions Club Model Railroad Show

David R. Cawley Middle School, 89 Whitehall Rd, Hooksett,
NH 03106. 10am-3pm. We will have tables at the show with
merchandise, clothing, models, books, and more.

May

B&MRRHS Monthly Public Meeting

Location and date TBD, likely in New Hampshire. See
website and May-June *Newsletter* for more information.

BOSTON & MAINE RAILROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization composed of people who want to share their knowledge, and learn more about, the history and operations of the Boston and Maine Railroad, its predecessors, and successors. Formed in 1971 by a group of interested B&M employees and railfans, the B&MRRHS now has nearly one thousand active members.

Our principal activities are publication of our journal, the *B&M Bulletin*, and our *Newsletter*, monthly speakers, archives and hardware preservation, preservation of the B&M 0-6-0 switcher No. 410 and coach-baggage combine No. 1244, participation in railroad shows, and maintaining two web sites: www.bmrrhs.org and www.flickr.com/photos/bmrrhs. If you would like to join the Society, you can join on-line or download an application at www.bmrrhs.org.

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About the Newsletter

The Boston & Maine Railroad Historical Society *Newsletter* is published six times a year. We welcome your articles, photographs, and news items about the Society, the Boston & Maine Railroad, and current railroad events in New England. It is best to query the editor before writing articles. Please address correspondence to the Newsletter Editor at:

Rick Kfoury, B&MRRHS Newsletter
B&MRRHS, P.O. Box 9116,
Lowell, MA 01853

or email rkfoury@bmrrhs.org.

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MEMBERSHIP AND DUES

Join us on-line or renew your membership on-line at bmrrhs.org. Credit cards may be used if you join or renew on-line. Dues are also payable by check, money order, postal money order, or cash (in person only). All payments in U.S. dollars. Please allow four to six weeks for processing.

Basic Individual - \$40	Basic & Spouse - \$43
Contributing - \$50	Sustaining - \$55
Supporting - \$80	*Canada & Overseas - \$75
Benefactor - \$100	Corporate - \$500

* *Canada & Overseas members please pay via PayPal*

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Notices are sent monthly based on members' renewal dates. If we have an email on file for you, a renewal reminder will be sent via email. Envelopes are clearly marked "RENEWAL NOTICE." Not responding will result in removal from the member list.

- When members renew, typically the month of renewal does not change. (A member with a 06/19 renewal date who pays in August would have a 06/20 update to renew.)
- The label on your *Newsletter* envelope shows your renewal date.
- Refer questions to the Membership Secretary Stephen DeFrancesco at bmrrhsmembership@gmail.com.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Please advise Membership Secretary of new address before you move. Returned and forwarded mail costs the Society money. Write *Stephen DeFrancesco, Membership Secretary, B&MRRHS, P.O. Box 1438, Tewksbury, MA 01876.*

NEW MEMBERS

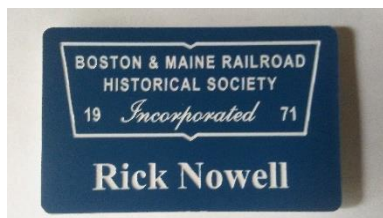
We would like to take the opportunity to our welcome new members who have joined the Society since the last *Newsletter* and into November (Springfield additions will be next issue):

- Dan Peck; Peabody, MA
- Hillari McFarland; Arrowhead, ME
- John Galloway; Walpole, NH
- William Harding; Jacksonville, FL
- Richard O’Kane; Exeter, NH
- William Coulson; Glenview, IL
- Michael Dayton; Marquette, MI
- Michael Peverett; Dover, NH
- Vicki Bacon-Thomas; Williamsburg, VA
- Richard Brock; Dayton, OH
- Sam B. Andrews; North Newton, KS
- Kevin Curtis; Canaan, CT
- Michael D. Thomas; Hollis, NH
- Kim & Billy Chaffee; Troy, NH
- Jacob Eidsmoe; Watertown, MA
- Marc Mazzarelli; Cambridge, MA

Welcome Aboard!

MEMBERSHIP BADGES AVAILABLE

B&MRRHS members are entitled to wear the official membership badge at all society events. The badge is an attractive shade of blue with white lettering, 3 inches wide by 2 inches tall. The badge has a secure magnetic attachment system that eliminates pinholes from shirts and sweater. The Society sells and mails badges at cost. Please make checks for \$12 payable to B&MRRHS and send to: Name Badge, B&MRRHS, P.O. Box 9116, Lowell, MA, 01853. Please specify name for the badge. NOTE: Magnets are known to be harmful to those who utilize Pacemakers.



NEW MAILING ADDRESS FOR MEMBERSHIPS

Please be advised that we have moved our P.O. Box for new and renewed memberships, and we are **no longer using** the Derry, NH P.O. Box address. Our current P.O. Box address is:

Membership Secretary, B&MRRHS
P.O. Box 1438,
Tewksbury, MA 01876

WEBMASTER’S REPORT

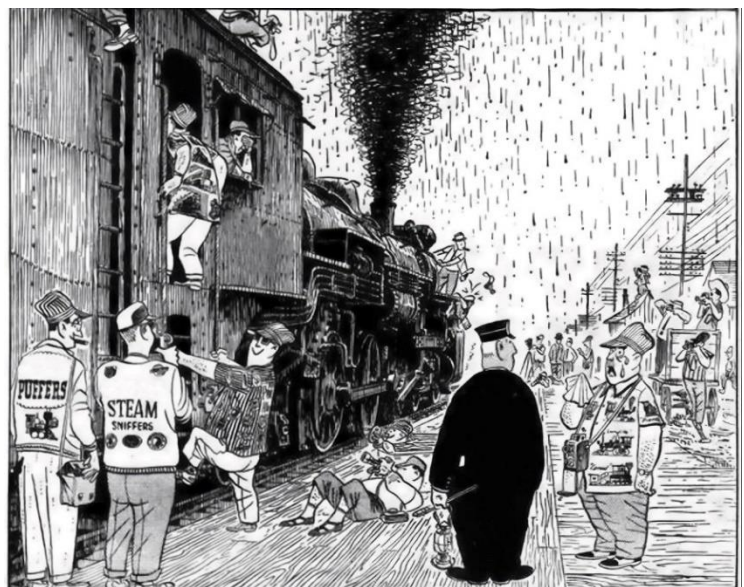
Over the past two months, the Online Committee has been working hard to release new content on our YouTube channel. We released three episodes of our new series, “Minuteman Steam”, and an episode of our series “Minuteman Tales” focusing on Bedford, MA and the Lexington Branch. We have also uploaded a number of railroad videos shot by Russell F. Munroe, Jr., and several “Living History” interviews. We currently have 4,155 people following our Facebook page, and have 1,400 YouTube subscribers (up from 1,233 at last *Newsletter*). We also worked to release bonus content online from the first issue of our new photo feature magazine, *Highliner*. Thanks for your support!

– James P. Nizgus, Webmaster

EDITOR’S NOTE

As I write this in late January, we in New Hampshire have just “endured” (it certainly felt like enduring) back-to-back snowstorms; so the warmer months — when you may read this — are a welcome thought. We are looking into another great year for the Society, with great programs scheduled for March and April and lots of projects to keep us busy. This issue will mark my fourth full year at the throttle of the *Newsletter*; a fact which is increasingly hard to believe. Yet I look back on the people I have met, the events I have attended, and all the history that I have been exposed to — and am reminded that this is the best organization that I have ever been lucky enough to be a part of. I hope you enjoy this issue of the *Newsletter*, and as always, thank you for your membership and support. ☘

– Rick Kfoury, Newsletter Editor



"I certainly do NOT have a cinder in my eye... she's just so beautiful I can't help crying!"



FROM THE ARCHIVES

B&MRRHS Archives Report
Rick Nowell, Archives Chairman

TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND MEMBERS OF THE BOSTON & MAINE RAILROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY:

The Archives Committee is pleased to submit the following report for the year ended December 31, 2022.

GENERAL INFORMATION — The Committee acquires, organizes, and preserves photographs, documents, drawings, and other paper materials related to the history of the Boston and Maine and Maine Central Railroads, their predecessors and successors, and other New England railroads. We furnish archival information to many different patrons including researchers, writers, preservationists, surveyors, engineers, lawyers, modelers, and genealogists.

The Archives are located in the Patrick J. Mogan Cultural Center at 40 French Street in Lowell, Massachusetts. This building is owned by the National Park Service and is part of the Lowell National Historical Park. Our Archives are housed within the Center for Lowell History, the UMass Lowell special collections library. The B&MRRHS collection is owned by the Society and managed by the Archives Committee. It occupies an area of about 1,000 square feet where we have shelving, cabinet storage, and workspace for researchers. Our cooperative agreement with the University gives our collection a secure, climate-controlled environment and an accessibility that is unmatched by most other railroad historical societies.

At Lowell the visitor will find photographs, slides, negatives, right of way and track maps, valuation surveys, timetables, books, periodicals, mechanical drawings of structures and equipment, and a wealth of data organized alphabetically by subject—Abandonments, Accidents, Baggage, etc.

The Center for Lowell History, including the B&MRRHS Archives, is open Monday through Thursday, 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM, and the third Saturday of the month from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM. Intending visitors should email the Archives Chairman to make an appointment: fnowell3@gmail.com. This is an appropriate place to offer our thanks to Tony Sampas, the archivist-in-chief and general manager of the Center for Lowell History, without whose help we could not offer such a welcoming and well-maintained facility to our members and guests.

The Society rents additional space for the Archives (and for our Hardware collection and Sales Department) in a warehouse building in North Chelmsford, Mass. The Archives Committee uses this space to receive and catalog donations, to scan large format documents, and to store primary source material, principally railroad records and drawings.

OUR VOLUNTEERS — The Society's archival effort is performed by three groups.

Rick Nowell's group is composed of Ken Akerboom, David Ashenden, Len Bachelder, Brad Blodget, Paul Burke, Steve Butterworth, Carl Byron, Rick Conard, Eric DiVirgilio, Mike Dolan, Jack Dziadul, Bob Farrenkopf, Mark Fecteau, Bob Fuller, Marguerite Gropp, Tom Humphrey, Rick Hurst, Larry Kemp, Brad Kippen, Rick Kfoury, Alan LePain, Jack Madden, Dick Miller, Emily Nicewonger, Dan O'Brien, Rick Nowell, Keith Scarlett, Jimi Smith, Mal Sockol, Kris Spinney, Leo Sullivan, Henry Taves, Earl Tuson, Peter Violette, and Dave West. This group held 10 work sessions in 2022, as compared to 9 in 2021 and 14 in 2020. The average attendance in 2022 was 7, as compared to 5 in 2021 and 4 in 2020. During 2022, this group was engaged in large format scanning, cataloging, and photo identification and labeling.

Many of our committee members and friends made important contributions by performing work in "off hours." Ken Akerboom improved and updated his popular freight car database. David Ashenden, Len Bachelder, Steve Butterworth, Carl Byron, Rick Conard, Jack Dziadul, Tom Humphrey, Alan LePain, Jack Madden, Richard Symmes, and Tom E. Thompson answered a variety of historical inquiries. Jack Dziadul updated his B&M Bulletin and Modelers Notes indexes.

Steve Butterworth and Paul Burke cataloged collections. Rick Hurst found good homes for duplicate and off-topic materials. Paul Burke filed new acquisitions at Lowell and assisted, along with Bob Fuller, with donation pick-up. Rick Kfoury helped with upload to the new Omeka on-line archives platform. Emily Nicewonger processed photos and filed new acquisitions at Lowell. Kris Spinney abstracted employee records. Peter Violette scanned B&M steam locomotive drawings for use by New England Steam Foundation's 470 restoration.

Rick Hurst's group, which includes Brad Blodget, Larry Kemp, and Dick Miller, continued meet regularly to process the Donald B. Valentine Fitchburg Division collection. Material relevant to specific locations are now in good alphabetical order. The remaining collections are being organized by subject. Rick Hurst's volunteer group also devoted several work sessions to establishing a comprehensive file of Bulletin Orders, Notices, and Circulars at North Chelmsford. These documents are organized by year and division, the earliest being from 1933.

Brad Kippen's group includes Kris Spinney, Rick Kfoury, and Rick Nowell. During Calendar Year 2022, they added 1,108 Chaffin Collection negatives to the BMRRHS archive. Brad reports that 4,700 negatives are 100% complete — that is to say — scanned, post-processed, negative ID's added, and registered in the negative database.

- 3,081/4,700 (66%) of completed negatives are Boston and Maine.
- 1,619/4,700 (33%) of completed negatives are other railroads USA and Canada

An additional 883 negatives are presently in progress. All of these are scanned and in various stages of the post-processing and registering the data to the database.

- 557 / 883 (63%) of in-progress negatives are Boston and Maine. These are the last of Chaffin's Boston and Maine negatives to complete. Topics remaining include the steam switchers (0-4-0, 0-6-0, and 0-8-0), pre-1911 steam copy negatives, B&M predecessor copy negatives, and some of the location pictures.
- 326 / 883 (37%) of the in-progress negatives are non-Boston and Maine.

Brad has been in correspondence with a number of railroad historical societies to obtain locomotive information for negatives in the Chaffin Collection and to make scans of locomotives on these foreign railroads available to their members. In so doing, we have established friendships with other organizations like ours.

During the year we also received assistance from an intern, Brandon Bourgeois, a remote learning student affiliated with a library/archival program at Clarion University. We were saddened by the death of our volunteer Al Taylor, who had contributed many hours to the Archives, especially in processing the locomotive photo collection of Edward Ozog. We miss his friendly presence at our work sessions.

DIGITAL SERVICES — In 2022 we continued the educational commitment (begun in 2013) to make archives material available online and in digital format.

- As part of the Society's remodeling of our website (www.bmrrhs.org) we adopted the Omeka web publishing platform for our On-Line Archives. Omeka is a computer program that generates an attractive, professional looking on-line display of archival items. We went live with Omeka in December. We continue to make adjustments and complete the uploading of materials to the new site.
- Over 2,600 historical photographs can be viewed on our Flickr site (www.flickr.com/photos/bmrrhs). Archives photos also appear on the Society's Facebook page.
- In 2020, we released an updated DVD containing a complete run of the B&M Bulletin from Vol I, No. 1 (1971) to Vol. XXXI, No. 4 (2019). The master disk was prepared from scans furnished by David Ashenden and Bulletin Andrew M. Wilson. The disk is available through our on-line Sales Department.
- Over 2,000 large format documents have been scanned since 2018. These include valuation plans, dispatcher sheets, bridge plans, station plans, and locomotive and car plans. We hope to post them eventually to the Society's website. In the meantime, they are available for viewing on demand.

- Brad Kippen's group has scanned, catalogued, and preserved over 4,700 negatives from the Robert E. Chaffin Collection. (See above).
- Our consolidated employee database currently has over 23,000 entries. While we do not hold comprehensive employee records, we can gather names, locations, and occupations of employees from items in our collection. This is painstaking work, but we are rewarded by being able to provide information to descendants of B&M employees and other researchers.

As we make an ever-increasing commitment to digitization and providing on-line resources, our exposure to loss or expense from destruction of electronic records grows too. We have adopted a cloud-based backup system to supplement our existing procedures.

REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION — Every few days we receive a request for information. Some of these inquiries can be answered by the Chairman from his files. Others require time at the Archives in Lowell or Chelmsford to locate and copy photos, employee records, or data. Still, others defy solution, and we refer them to our “panel of experts.” This crowd-sourcing approach has proved highly effective, and we thank all of you who have contributed to these lively and enlightening exchanges of knowledge.

OUR DONORS — We logged in a total of 55 donations in 2022, as compared to 71 in 2021 and 59 in 2020. Donors included Paul Calantropo, Southern Railway Historical Association, Lew Walter (courtesy of J. Leonard Bachelder), Monticello Railway Museum, Steam Railroading Institute, Ron Palmquist, Center for Lowell History, Paul Baillio, William H. McCaffrey, Geoff Beard, John A. Goulet, Roger Liller, Edwin R. Hiller, Candice Strawley, J.W. Wright, The Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Historical Society, Richard Miller and Larry Kemp, Richard K. Hurst, Andover (N.H.) Historical Society, Michael C. Lennon, Rich and Dennis Snook, Guilford Transportation Industries, Philip R. Jordan, Family of Rodney H. Peterson, Ken Akerboom, B&MRRHS Sales Dept., Ron Rand, Fred Guth, Pennsylvania Railroad Technical & Historical Society, Bradford G. Blodget, Sanford-Springvale Mousam Land Trust, Soo Line Historical and Technical Society Inc., Robert P. Fuller, CSX Corporation, Peter Violette, David E. Boyd, John F. Meixel and the Colorado Railroad Museum, Scott Batson, Peter J. Edmunds, Eric Fleming, Alden Dreyer, Thornton H. Waite, Mary Ann Nelligan courtesy of Bob Goodwin, Robert Liljestrand, New Haven Railroad Historical and Technical Association, Cliff Temple, and Nashua Historical Society.

We extend warmest thanks to all our donors for their generosity and their interest in our work of preserving the history of the Boston and Maine and Maine Central Railroads. We encourage our members and friends to donate additional material to our growing collection. We will also appreciate receiving information about potential donors.

Our committee welcomes new volunteers. We need researchers, catalogers, scanners, and organizers. All you need is an interest in railroad history. Contact the Chairman for more information. I am, as always, impressed and inspired by how much can be accomplished by volunteers.

Respectfully submitted,

Rick Nowell

Frederick N. Nowell, III
Chairman, Archives Committee



Society volunteers at the 2023 Amherst Railway Society train show. L—R: James P. Nigzus, Carl Byron, Jim Nigzus, Steve DeFrancesco, Rick Kfoury, and Dave Hampton. A big “thank you” also to Paul Kosciolk, Rick Nowell, Mal Sockol, Myles Gadon, and Andrew Riedl who assisted during our most successful show at Springfield to date!

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS

January-February Newsletter — An error was pointed out in the caption of the photo on pg. 9, which read: “Passenger service on the Eastern Route from Boston to Portland would continue until 1965.” That should read *Portsmouth*, not Portland. Passenger service on the Eastern Route to Portsmouth from Boston ended in 1965 with the closing of the Merrimack River drawbridge in Newburyport, Massachusetts. Service on the Eastern between Portsmouth and Portland, however, ended much earlier in 1952, when most of the line between those two cities was abandoned.☞

Highliner Issue #1 — Regarding the top left photo on pg. 7, Alden Dreyer writes: “Train No.77 was northbound on the Connecticut River single track main line. The northbound and southbound tracks had not been created until after No.77 was abolished. You would need the Bulletin Order (pink) to establish the exact time and date, but this change first shows up on page 41 of ETT No.8 effective 25 October 1964. The change was necessary to abolish 6 operator's jobs and change East Northfield and Brattleboro from N to D. Convincing the Central Vermont to make this change was not easy.”☞



“Line of the Minute Man”

CSX OWNERSHIP BRINGS SWIFT UPDATES AND CHANGES

WATERVILLE, ME – CSX Transportation, the new corporate owners of Pan Am Railways and the contemporary operators of the former B&M and Maine Central systems, has been implementing many changes since assuming ownership last year.

Several aging Maine Central and Boston & Maine 50-foot boxcars, having run out their mandated service lives and now becoming decrepit, are being rounded up at Waterville and sent to AIM in Oakland, ME for scrapping. A video of one of these “funeral trains” leaving Waterville showed several ex-Maine Central boxcars in Guilford and Pan Am paint, and a handful still sporting Maine Central’s harvest gold. One car was still in its as-delivered Boston & Maine paint, 40+ years later.

Perhaps more noteworthy are the abundant updates to the physical plant and trackage. At Rigby Yard in South Portland, ME, a new parking lot has been installed, the yard has largely been cleared of debris, and some trackwork has begun. PT Tower, once thought to have been a target for demolition, is being rebuilt as maintenance-of-way office space. In New Hampshire, ties were replaced on the Northern Line and brush was cut.

Several rail trains carrying welded rail have made their way onto the system, and at one time three were on the property at once. The bulk of the rail replacement and trackwork so far has taken place on the line between Worcester and Ayer, with speed limits on that line now reaching 25 mph. In Maine, the line between Waterville and Mattawamkeag is slated for major rehabilitation. This aligns with CSX’s plan to establish heavy container traffic to the Port of St. John; a major reason for acquiring Pan Am Railways was for a direct route to Canadian ports.

The Western Route Mainline in Maine is also seeing improvements. According to Dave Blazejewski, “while much of the work is wholly CSXT funded to support their freight operations and simply to pull the PAR property liberally out of the mud, this project is different. Six miles of rebuilt welded double-track will stretch from CPF 228 in Wells to just east of the Elm St. crossing in North Berwick. This nearly \$33 million project is funded 73% by the Federal Government, 20% by the state, and about 7% by CSXT (ex-Pan Am).”

Though the work is sorely needed, one must hope that the service to come will be just as impressive.☞

ROGER ROBAR (1936-2023)



Roger Robar of Lisbon, NH, died peacefully at his home on Saturday, Jan. 7, 2023, from pulmonary fibrosis with his wife at his side. He was 86.

Roger was born on June 15, 1936, in Littleton to Lorne and Hazel (Lucia) Robar. He was a lifelong resident of Lisbon and married his high

school sweetheart, Ruth (Lee), on Sept. 17, 1960.

He worked for Whitney's Weatherproofing for 36 years, specializing in remodeling kitchens and other home improvements. He was highly sought-after for his workmanship and loving attention to details.

Roger's passion for all aspects of railroading developed as a young man and continued throughout his life. He was a sought-after wealth of knowledge to historians and modelers alike, especially for the period of steam to first generation diesels on the B&M.

His home, HO-scale, layout was 12x28' with three levels reproducing the route from Well River and Woodsville to the Groveton paper mill, including all the railroad-served industries along the way. Roger and his buddies created scratch-built bridges and buildings to replicate locations from the period. As he would say, he was recreating history in miniature.

But not only in miniature. After retiring, he worked part-time at the Conway Scenic Railroad, restoring historic rail cars to their original glory. During that time, he owned a working caboose from the period and later an on-site, refrigerated box car converted into a very comfortable apartment with bedroom, bath, kitchen and living area. No train buff had it better than living comfortably at the rail yard while working with like-minded people to restore and operate historic trains.

Roger was involved in many organizations and activities in Lisbon, although his legacy might best be seen in the rescued and restored historic Lisbon Railroad Station. Built by the Boston, Concord, and Montreal Railroad in 1853, the station is noted for its unusual architectural design, the only station of its kind. Serving as Clerk of the Works, he donated hundreds of hours to the restoration project. Every aspect of the project, from the doors to the shape of the clapboards and their color,

was restored or custom designed by Roger. For five years, he would be at the station working to bring it back to life, piece by piece. It stands as a monument to the past, present, and future and is now open to the public.

He was known not only for his woodworking and photographic skills, but for his character, integrity, unselfish dedication, enthusiasm, and creative energy. Roger is survived by his wife of 62 years, Ruth (Lee) and their two sons, Randy and his wife Lisa of South Royalton, Vt., and Doug and his wife Elizabeth and four children of Stowe, Vt. He was preceded in death by his sisters Marjorie (Poor), Margaret (Jarrell), and his twin brother, Ronald.

Adapted from <https://www.caledonianrecord.com/>

DWIGHT WINKLEY (1939-2023)

"It is with regret we announce the passing of Mark "Dwight" Winkley who passed away at his Ossipee home on December 19th, 2022, after a short battle with cancer. Born April 30th, 1939, to Mark and Mae Winkley, Dwight was a railroad enthusiast from a young age all the way through his life.

Dwight served proudly in the United States, Army, transportation corps at Fort Eustis where he learned the practical skills of railroading as a young man. Dwight was also a very early member of the Boston & Maine historical society as well as the Walker Transportation Collection in Beverly.

Dwight was a dedicated volunteer at the Seashore Trolley Museum, WW&F, Biddeford Station, and Cotton Valley Rail Club in Wolfeboro New Hampshire where he ran both his restored Bangor & Aroostook and U.S. Army railcars. He was also a founding member of the Northeast Live Steamers and would hold runs at his 7.25" layout at the family farm in Ossipee.

One of Dwight's proud accomplishments before he retired from his job at the Hot-Watt corporation in Danvers, was to make the seat heating elements for the Flying Yankee restoration.

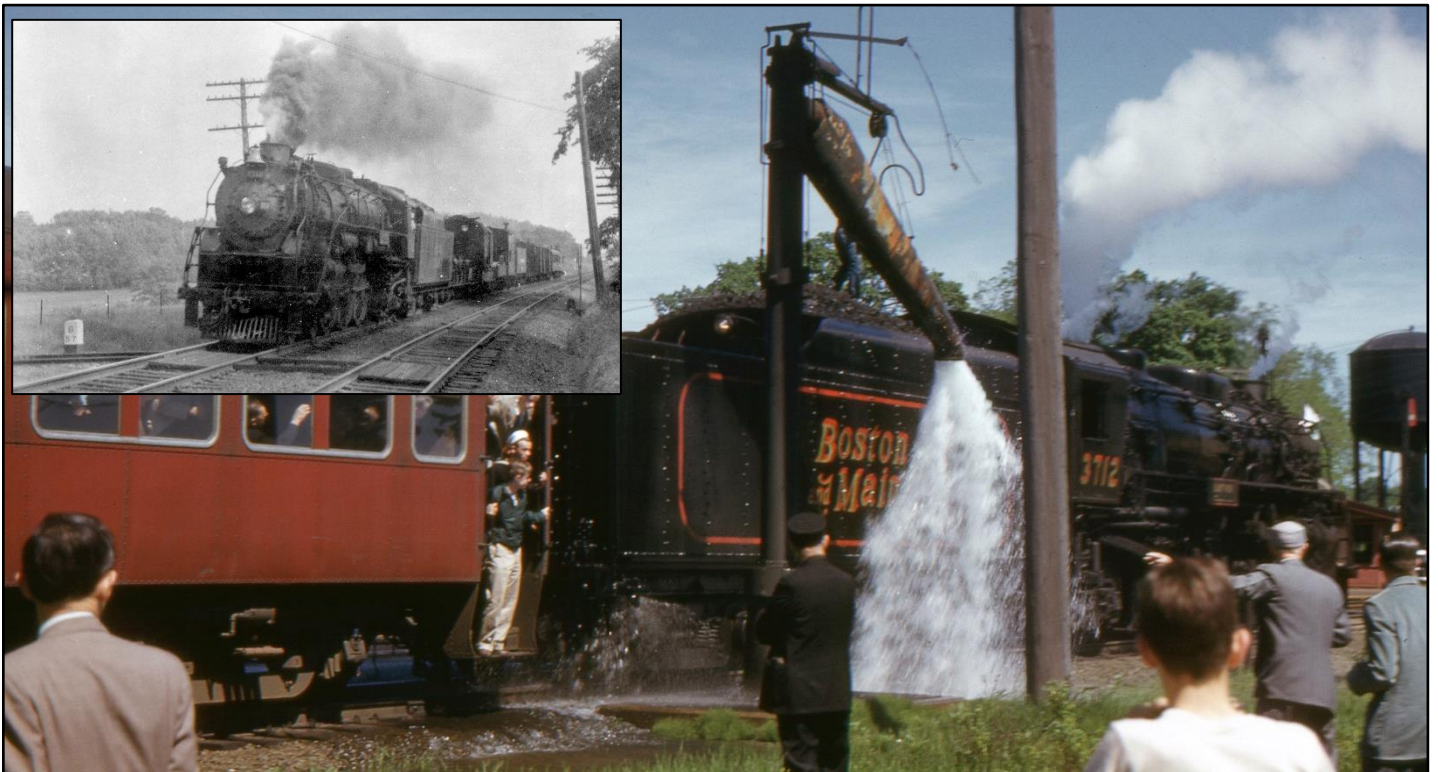
Dwight's quiet and polite presence will be sorely missed at the many organizations he volunteered at throughout the decades." *Submitted by Jesse Mazzie*



Vignettes from the Archives



Portland Division Superintendent Charles Came in his "office" at Rockingham Junction, Newfields, NH. June 9, 1952. Came was supervising the clean-up of a wreck at Rockingham Junction. The wreck was caused when the crew of B&M P-4a 4-6-2 3712, leading a June 8 Railroad Enthusiast fantrip to Waterville, ME, was unable to shut off the water standpipe after stopping for water at the Junction (below). The track washed out after the excursion departed, and a freight derailed. The excursion returned to Boston via the Eastern Route led by a diesel, and 3712 powered a train of Maine Central wreck equipment which then headed to Rockingham to clean up the wreck (inset). Two photos, Dana D. Goodwin Collection, B&MRRHS Archives.



ANDREW'S EXCURSIONS #18 WARREN ROCK CUT - DEEP IN THE OLIVERIAN NOTCH

B&MRRHS DIRECTOR ANDREW RIEDL



Looking down the old right of way of the former B&M White Mountains Division in Warren, NH. You pass through a deep rock cut that almost gives you the feeling of being in a tunnel. The foliage has certainly grown in more since the line was abandoned back in 1954, and this adds to the feeling of being in tight quarters. Andrew Riedl photo May 31, 2010.

“There is a clear spring emanating from one side through the ice and snow, a welcome stop for summertime track workers ever since the early days of construction.”

- *The Up-Country Line* by Edgar T. Mead 1975

When I started writing this column three years ago, I wanted to emphasize how many interesting and unique locations there are on the former Boston and Maine system. It's been awhile since I've profiled a non-station location, and I also realized I haven't yet explored a rock cut. In a railroad chock-full of charming country depots, gritty industrial spurs and forgotten rural junctions, sometimes rock cuts can be overlooked. They are, however, fascinating in their own right; from the tight clearances to the often-deadly methodologies used to excavate them in an era long before workplace safety was a priority.

New Hampshire, being the Granite State, has several of these noteworthy passes; curiously one on each of the former East-West lines between the Merrimack River watershed and the Connecticut River watershed. From South to North, the B&M lays claim to the Troy Ledges on the Cheshire, the Newbury cut on the Concord & Claremont, the Orange cut on the Northern, and finally the Warren Summit cut on the White Mountains Division. This excursion will focus on a visit I made to the Warren cut back in the late Spring of 2010 with my cousin Kurt.

To provide a little background on the Warren cut and its construction, we travel all the way back to the year 1850 when the original Boston, Concord & Montreal Railroad (BC&M) reached the hamlet of Warren, NH, just under 71 miles north of Concord via Laconia and Plymouth, and 145 miles north of Boston. The railroad had been conceptualized in the early 1840's and construction soon commenced to provide a connection to the upper Connecticut River Valley and eventually Canada. To proceed north beyond Warren, the line had to pass through the deep woods alongside Black Brook, eventually reaching Oliverian Notch just south of Glencliff. The Notch represented the high point of the pass between the base of 4,802-foot Mount Moosilauke and 2,184-foot Webster Slide Mountain.

Edgar T. Mead's 1975 book on the BC&M stated that in order to penetrate the Notch and transition from the Baker River watershed to the Connecticut River watershed, a three-quarter mile cut had to be blasted at a cost of \$150,000 and lead to the loss of one life during the excavation process. Once completed, however, the rest of the BC&M fell into place quickly; trains would run for roughly a century until 1954 when the line between Plymouth and Blackmount (North Haverhill), part of the White Mountains Division mainline at that time, was abandoned by the B&M.

Fast forward to approximately the year 2007 when I first started extensively researching the corridor between Warren and Glencliff. I was able to observe that this segment of the former line passed through a remote section of the woods, fairly far removed from NH State Highway 25. I had read that on this section there was an interesting rock cut, and I knew I would have to explore it someday.

I got my chance in May of 2010, when my cousin Kurt and I had been discussing taking a hike in the New Hampshire woods. I had mentioned hiking on the old railroad bed and seeing what we could find in the way of artifacts, as well as getting to see the rock cut firsthand. In addition to my interest of exploring all things B&M, hiking has long been a favorite pursuit of mine as well, so this particular excursion seemed to be ideal in that it would combine both.

We drove up NH Route 25 following the old White Mountains Division through the Baker River Valley and then continued north of Warren into a much more rural area until we reached the village of Glencliff. Just beyond that is the Appalachian Trail (AT) parking area. I parked my Subaru Impreza and we followed the AT into the woods headed towards Webster Slide

Mountain. Soon after entering the birch trees, we reached the point where the AT crossed the roadbed of the former B&M line. I remember the excitement I felt walking down the old right of way on that muggy day in late May. The feelings of connection to the history of the line, and the thrill of finally being able to explore something that had seemed somewhat inaccessible previously were very exciting and gave me motivation to hike quickly. We passed through a small rock cut prior to reaching the Glenciff depot site and then crossed Station Road (more on finding this exact depot site in a future article. For now, the rock cut alone is worth focusing on). We then walked down a decent length tangent in the woods, and soon noticed the woods slowly rising higher and higher on either side of us. This was the cut that we were entering, and it happened so subtly that it would have been very easy to not even notice.

The right of way is very well defined through the woods here as it lives on as a popular recreational corridor, particularly for ATV's and snowmobiles. The roadbed through the cut would be very easily drivable by most vehicles due to the ATV's packing down the dirt firmly. I wasn't expecting a right of way abandoned for 55 years to be so well defined. There were unfortunately no B&M era artifacts along this corridor that I was able to find, but once we entered the main part of the rock cut, we did make some interesting discoveries.

One noteworthy item I found was a concrete reinforcement wall that was built into part of the cut and made me wonder when, in fact, it was built. Was it done after the line was abandoned, or did this structure date back to earlier than 1954? It seemed unlikely that it would have been placed there after abandonment, but at the same time it very much gave the appearance of fairly modern poured concrete. In addition to this, you can also view the original drill holes in many of the boulders that line the cut, and it's quite incredible to think that these holes are over 150 years old!

Mead's book references the freshwater spring that flows through the ice on the side of the rocks. A 1998 mountain biking guide to the White Mountains that I own also references this spring. Kurt and I walked by it as well, and if I recall correctly, it was flowing out of one of the rock formations from a black tube. We've all read about the potential hazards of drinking non-treated water, but this did indeed look very refreshing and appealing on a humid New Hampshire day, and I had to resist topping off my Camelbak bladder!

Staying on the subject of water, you can tell when you've reached the summit of Oliverian Notch since the runoff in the gully on either side of the right of way

switches direction while you're walking through. This is a very subtle change that many would not notice, but very interesting to see. The water shift is one of the only signs that you've reached the summit of the Notch, however, freight trains often needed assistance up the grade.

Kurt and I walked all the way through the cut and down the roadbed until we reached the sign for the Black Brook Bog natural area. We then turned around and headed back towards Glenciff. As we got closer to the village, a large shape came into view down the right of way, and immediately my mind started to process the most likely options. A moose? A black bear? As we drew closer, however, the mystery form turned out to be in fact a girl riding a horse, most likely from the Oliverian School down the line in East Haverhill. I couldn't help but feel the irony that the "iron horse" once plied this right of way for 100 years, but on this warm May day, there was still a horse, but not one of the iron variety. It was still cool, however, to see that this trail is used not just by hikers, mountain bikers and ATVs, but more unique forms of transportation as well. After exchanging pleasantries with the equestrian we ended our hike, satisfied that we had immersed ourselves in the fascinating history and engineering of the Warren cut.



There's something very interesting and captivating about finding a rock cut lost deep in the woods. Warren was no exception, and even though I was unable to find any B&M artifacts, it was still a fascinating hike, and well worth a trip. In retrospect, the whole cut itself is in fact that lost piece of the B&M that I so actively seek out in all forms. I highly recommend that you explore this old right-of-way and rock cut for yourself, as you will gain a true appreciation of the will and determination needed to build it. I also do recommend that you keep your eyes open for the "non-iron horses" on your hike as well! Happy Explorations! - AR



A worker cuts a length of rail during the clean-up of the wreck at Forge Village, MA on the Stony Brook Branch, 1964. These men, and their machines, no doubt got quite a bit of use in the 1960s and 1970s when it seemed that the B&M was having a major mishap nearly every week! H. Arnold Wilder photo, B&MRRHS Archives.



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