



**THE FIRST STATE MODEL RAILROAD  
CLUB, INC. NEWSLETTER  
AUGUST 2018**

**NEXT MEETING:**

The next meeting of The First State Model Railroad Club, Inc. will be held on **Tuesday, August 14, 2018 at 7:30 P.M.** at Jarrell Station at 1282 McKee Road, in Dover, DE.

**NOTES FROM PRESIDENT EATON:**

I can't believe that August is here already. Seem like the year is just whizzing by. So, let's see what's on the calendar this month. Well my calendar shows no functions for the club this month. How did that happen?

I have heard from WJMR that they would like us to come back to Bellevue this year. I have let the directors know and have asked to meet with the staff of WJMR to discuss what they would like and what we can provide. I have asked for this meeting to be held before our next meeting so we can discuss what we want to do. So hopefully we will have some good news on the 14<sup>th</sup>. Also, we have found out that there will be a program November 9 at 7:00 called, "Trains (Toy), Trains (Model), Trains (Real)". This will be held at the 1<sup>st</sup> Presbyterian Church in Milford. More information will be available at the August Meeting. Mark this on your calendar.

I have found an article about a railroad that was near my hometown of Port Penn, but that was way before I was even thought of. What I found interesting is this railroad went through my grandmother's farm and there was a loading dock (it was just a pile dirt) on her property and I remember playing on it. This article was written by a member of the Port Penn Historical Society. I could not copy the maps and pictures they talked about, but I do have a printed copy of the article if you are interested in seeing them. The article is below, and I hope you enjoy it.

So, take it easy this month but be ready to get some work done in September and October. If we do the Bellevue gig then we will have lots of work to get ready for that, plus shows to set up for in September and November plus our annual open house in November. We have a picnic to get ready for and our annual Christmas party, which we need to set a date for at our next meeting. The future looks exciting and very busy. Enjoy this down time but be ready for the fall work load.

Have a happy summer, enjoy time with your family and get some vacation time in there. Oh, don't forget to slip some work on your railroad in there. Happy model railroading.

**Sam Eaton, President**

## **THE PORT PENN RAILROAD**

One of the good things about growing up in Port Penn was that no-one was from the wrong side of the tracks, simply because there was no railroad. Or was there?

Let's take a trip back in time to before any of us were born. The year is 1917, and the world has been at war in Europe for 3 years. On April 6, 1917, the US declared war on Germany, and the immense job of converting a peace-time economy to a war-time one began. The railroads were nationalized and improved, and daylight savings time was introduced to help conserve fuel. And of course powder from the area's manufacturers (DuPont, Atlas, Hercules) had to be loaded into ammunition and bombs, and gotten to the ocean for transport to Europe.

In early 1918, the Army contacted the Marlin-Rockwell Corporation with a proposal to establish an experimental loading plant for the loading of aerial bombs. By May of that year the United States Government signed a contract with a subsidiary, the Marlin-Rockwell Loading Company, to construct a loading facility and also provide shipping facilities.

A rural marshy site consisting of 200 acres was purchased (with another 656 acres on option) along the Delaware River just north of Port Penn. Chosen for its proximity to Wilmington and its workforce, and the Atlas Powder Company's Perryville (Maryland) plant, the site was isolated with little population at risk in the event of an explosion.

Approximately 2,000 local workers were on site during the summer of 1918, building roads, grading the terrain, repairing the breached dike along the Delaware River (destroyed that spring in floods), and constructing bunkhouses and a wharf. Never completed, the loading plant consisted of mostly undeveloped land and temporary buildings including 30 workers' bunk houses, an administration building, and a commissary. The power house and dock were begun, but not finished.

One of the few completed projects was an access railroad built to haul in materials for the plant construction. Prior to the completion of this railroad all the materials for the plant had to be either shipped through the canal to the dock at St. Georges or by rail to the station at Mt. Pleasant, and then trucked over unimproved roads.

The Mt. Pleasant to Port Penn Railroad was constructed in August and September 1918. The 8.5-mile access line tied into the Delaware Branch of the Pennsylvania Railroad (now Norfolk Southern) at Mt. Pleasant, a small crossroads village with a railroad station, located at the intersection of Summit Bridge Road (U.S. 301) and Boyds Corner Road. The railroad ran almost due east until it crossed Rt. 13, then turned north and crossed Port Penn Road near Dutch Neck Road. The line then paralleled Port Penn Road until turning north to follow Thorntown Road. The line then turned north again just before the Ashton House and terminated at the plant site near the Thousand Acre Marsh. The line followed the high ground along the drainage divide between Scott's Run to the north and Augustine Creek to the

south, along farm property boundaries when possible, and avoided water bodies. The line was built as a single-track, standard-gauge railroad with a 65-foot right-of-way. The grade consisted of a slightly raised earthen berm with limited ballasting. Earthen fill excavated by steam shovel and hand labor adjacent to the track formed the raised grade, leaving a borrow pit running for stretches along the length of the corridor. The rails used were fabricated by Bethlehem Steel for the Russian government to build its Trans-Siberian Railroad, but a halt was put on shipping due to the Russian Revolution, and the rails were never delivered. The U.S. government then purchased the rails to use for army construction. The right-of-way was fenced in after the tracks were laid to keep farmers' horses and cattle from getting on the track.

The railroad's life was short. In November 1918 the armistice was signed, and the ammunition plant was still incomplete. However, the line was used heavily prior to the end of the war, transporting construction materials to the bomb loading plant site. In the few months it operated a variety of freight was hauled by the railroad, mostly material to build the facility's buildings and sewer and water systems. Some machinery for the bomb loading plant and equipment for the proposed power plant were also delivered, as well as supplies and equipment for outfitting the bunkhouses, administration building, and commissary. No bombs or explosives were ever delivered to the site. Even after the armistice the line was used, with approximately 500 rail carloads of freight delivered; this freight was unloaded and stored until army salvage decided what to do with it.

After the war ended the access line and the plant site were turned over to the Philadelphia Ordnance District Salvage Board. The line was used to haul materials off the site during demolition and dispersal of the plant materials. The tracks were dismantled after the site was cleared out, and the right-of-way returned to the original property owners. The route of the Mt. Pleasant to Port Penn Railroad is still discernible in aerial photos from 1954, despite the tracks having been dismantled over three decades earlier. It appears as a linear feature in some portions with the appearance of a road or farm lane, and in other places as a field boundary. In most cultivated fields the line is absent altogether, having been plowed under after removal of the line.

During a recent field trip to Mt. Pleasant several members of the Port Penn Historical Society discovered old rails and ties left from where the rail line branched off from the main tracks. Nearer Port Penn the most noticeable remnants are at the Dilworth farm. Here the railroad berm is very obvious, as is a ditch where the rails ran.

So Port Penn did have a railroad! While it was never of much use in the war effort, the very fact that it was built and used shows how much the affairs of the world intruded on the fairly sleepy backwater of Port Penn in the early part of the 20th century.

Acknowledgements: Much of the material presented here is from a study by Delaware Department of Transportation for the Route 301 highway extension project, available at: [http://www.deldot.gov/archaeology/us301/term\\_2/index.shtml](http://www.deldot.gov/archaeology/us301/term_2/index.shtml). Thanks to Wayne James for allowing photography at the Dilworth farm. Figure 1 courtesy of DelDot. Figure 2 courtesy of Delaware DataMIL. <http://datamil.delaware.gov/geonetwork/srv/en/main.home> Figures 3 and 4 courtesy of Wes Jones. Wes Jones currently lives and works in Wilmington but has an interest in the Port Penn area, and has been involved with the Society for several years. He enjoys researching and uncovering interesting historical facts that may have been long forgotten.

## **BOWSER TRIP:**

Saturday, July 14, 2018, three Club members, Les Souder, Paul Roy and Jim Thompson, met at Jarrell Station (Club House) at 6:00 A.M. to depart for Bowser Hobbie Shop and Manufacturer at 1302 Jordan Avenue, Montoursville, PA. First stop was to pick up Kevin Herrmann in Middletown and then to breakfast at The Dutch Way Family Restaurant on Rt. 41, The Gap, in Myerstown, PA. We all had the breakfast buffet at \$8.49 each, with about four rows of endless food. After that Les promised us a train show somewhere around Montoursville. We arrived at the buffet around 9:00 A.M. and left at 10:00 A.M. and arrived at the train show about noon.

The show was the same size as the train show in New Jersey that Henry would set up. Each of us purchased a few things and picked up couplers and paint brushes from Crusader for Billy Bob and Ed Kline. From there, about 5 miles away was Bowser. We were greeted by Richard Cox, the Sales Manager, who is always glad to see us. He wanted to know where the rest of the crew was. Les had his list of parts. He searched dozens of racks and found most of them. Paul Roy had a list of parts, which he too found most of. Kevin Herrmann had a couple engines and cars he was looking for. Jim Thompson went for just one thing, a caboos (N8) number 478107, which was advertised three months ago and which had just been released at that time. In the side room of Bowser was rows and rows of just released train cars. When Jim looked for that caboos the shelves were bare. Jim asked and Richard said they don't overstock anymore. When an item is released, they make enough for orders and one extra case. So that meant there were none to be found. So if you are looking for something special, when it comes out you better order it. Jim did find a Proto caboos in the display case as you enter the store. It was 478106, one number off, which Richard did sell to him. After about an hour of looking and purchasing, the group departed Bowser and headed for dinner.

About two hours away, we stopped at The Dutch Way Family Restaurant again for the dinner buffet. After 45 minutes of good eating, we departed for Dover about two hours away. We got home about 7:00 P.M. after a long but great day!

**Jim Thompson, Vice President**

**REMINDER: FSMRRC DUES WERE DUE (\$60/YR) BY THE END OF FEBRUARY.  
If your dues are not current, please send or give them to Treasurer Matthews.**

### **FSMRRC OFFICERS:**

PRESIDENT: SAM EATON

SECRETARY: JEFF SHOCKLEY

VICE PRESIDENT: JIM THOMPSON

TREASURER: BUZZ MATTHEWS

**FSMRRC PHYSICAL ADDRESS: 1282 McKEE RD., DOVER, DE 19904 (no mail is received at this address)**

**FSMRRC MAILING ADDRESS: 505 EAGLE NEST DR., CAMDEN, DE 19934 OR P. O. BOX 16, PORT PENN, DE 19731**

## **UPCOMING EVENTS:**

**Saturday, August 4, 2018 – The Shore Line Garden Railroad Club will set up a G-Scale display at the home of Richard Stockslager (weather permitting) in conjunction with the Wyoming Peach Festival, 111 Broad St., Wyoming, DE, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.**

**Saturday-Sunday, August 4-5, 2018. Greenberg's Great Train & Toy Show.** Greater Philadelphia Expo Center, 100 Station Ave., Oaks, PA, 10am-4pm. Admission: \$10 Saturday (good for both days), \$9 Sunday only. Kids 11 and under admitted free and do not need a ticket. Free parking. 300+ tables of trains for sale. Exhibitors from across the country. Huge operating model train displays. Free workshops and demonstrations, free door prize giveaways. Free test track - test run your trains at the show.

**Saturday-Sunday, August 11-12, 2018. Greenberg's Great Train & Toy Show.** New Jersey Expo Center, 97 Sunfield Avenue, Edison, NJ, 10am-4pm. Admission: \$10 Saturday (good for both days), \$9 Sunday only. Kids 11 and under admitted free and do not need a ticket. Free parking. 300+ tables of trains for sale. Exhibitors from across the country. Huge operating model train displays. Free workshops and demonstrations, free door prize giveaways. Free test track - test run your trains at the show.

**September 8, 2018 – Hagerstown Model Railroad Museum Model Train Sale.** Washington County Ag Center, Rt. 65 (3 miles north of Antietam Battlefield). 9am-2pm. Admission: \$5. Trains of all Gauges, Brass, Lionel & American Flyer. Railroad Collectibles and Hobby Tools and Parts.

**September 23, 2018 – TCA Atlantic Division Train Show.** Sheet Metal Workers Union Hall (Penns Landing Caterers), 1301 S. Columbus Blvd., Philadelphia, PA. TCA Members: 8am-1pm, general public: 9am-1pm. Admission: \$5 for adults or Families (Limit 2 Parents and children under 12).

**September 29, 2018 – Clayton Railroad Days, Clayton, DE.**

**October 6, 2018 – Delaware Train Show.** Nur Shrine Center, 198 S. DuPont Hwy., New Castle, DE. 9:00am-2:00pm. Admission: \$5.00, children under the age of 12 are free, \$10.00 Early Buyers 8:00am Admission.

**October 7, 2018 – 42nd Annual Lehigh Valley Regional Train Show and Expo.** Charles Chrim Community Center, 4100 Green Pond Rd., Easton, PA. 10am-4pm. Admission: \$5, kids 12 and under FREE. Timetables, Lanterns, Model Trains, Pictures, Books & Magazines, Food

& beverages on site, Kids can enter to win an HO-scale trainset, On-going rail presentations by noted local photographers.

**October 7, 2018 – New Hope-Solebury Train Show and Sale.** Eagle Fire House, 46 N. Sugas Rd., New Hope, PA. 8:30am-1:30pm. Admission: \$5, kids under 12 FREE. 100+ tables of all scales, railroadiana and operating layout.

**October 27-28, 2018 – The Great Scale Model Train Show.** Maryland State Fairgrounds, 2200 York Road, Timonium, MD. Saturday: 9am-5pm, Sunday: 10am-4pm. Admission: \$9.00 for both days, \$8.00 for Sunday only. Children up to 15 FREE with a paid adult.

## **FSMRRC LICENSE PLATE**

Are you interested in getting one of these license plates? If so, please let Sam know as soon as possible. If we order 5 or more the cost will be \$12.00 each **or** \$15.00 each if we order less than 5. You can also sign up at the Club. These would look great on the front of your vehicle. And it would give us more recognition in the community.

