



The Westconn Manifest

The Monthly Newsletter of the
Western Connecticut Chapter of the
National Railway Historical Society

Since 1953



www.westctnrhs.org

January 2005

Happy New Year!



Photo by Tony White

2004 National Convention
St. Paul, Minneapolis

THE WESTCONN MANIFEST
is the official newsletter of the Western
Connecticut Chapter of the National
Railway Historical Society – (NRHS).

Articles which appear in
THE WESTCONN MANIFEST
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Please address comments, any
contributions of material, complaints and
exchange copies of other chapter
newsletters to:

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The Western Connecticut Chapter of the
NRHS is separately incorporated as a CT
not-for-profit corporation.

The Chapter is involved in the
preservation of American railroad history
and artifacts.

Chapter Officers

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The Chapter meets monthly, usually on
the 4th Monday, at the United
Congregational Church 275 Richards
Ave. in Norwalk, CT or at the
SoNo Switch Tower Museum
77 Washington St. Norwalk, CT
at 8 P.M.

Meeting dates for 2005:

1/24, 2/28, 3/28, 4/25, 5/23*, 6/27*, 7/25*,
8/22*, 9/26*, 10/24, 11/28 and 12/19.

*Chapter meeting to held at the SoNo
Switch Tower in South Norwalk, CT

The SoNo Switch Tower Museum is
maintained and operated by volunteers
of the Western Connecticut Chapter.

Western Connecticut Chapter -
NRHS Inc.

77 Washington Street
Norwalk, CT 06854

203 246-6958

www.westctnrhs.org
www.sonotower.org



Dan Gallo Jr. - Tarrytown, New York

From Add Austin

EVERYTHING HAS A HISTORY

Here is a look into the corporate mind that is very interesting, educational, historical, completely true, and hysterical, all at the same time! It forms an interesting note on how history evolves (or doesn't).

The United States standard railroad gauge (width between the two rails) is 4 feet, 8.5 inches. That's an exceedingly odd number. Why was that gauge used? Because that's the way they built them in England, and English expatriates built the US railroads.

Why did the English build them like that? Because the first rail lines were built by the same people who built the pre-railroad tramways, and that's the gauge they used.

Why did "they" use that gauge then? Because the people who built the tramways used the same jigs and tools that they used for building wagons, which used that wheel spacing.

Why did the wagons have that particular odd wheel spacing? Well, if they tried to use any other spacing, the wagon wheels would break on some of the old, long distance roads in England, because that's the spacing of the wheel ruts on those long, old roads.

So who built those old rutted roads? The first long distance roads in Europe (and England) were built by Imperial Rome for their legions. The roads have been used ever since.

And the ruts in the roads? Roman war chariots first formed the initial ruts, which everyone else had to match for fear of destroying their wagon wheels. Since the chariots were made for (or by) Imperial Rome, they were all alike in the matter of wheel spacing. The US standard railroad gauge of 4 feet, 8.5 inches derives from the original specification for an Imperial Roman war chariot!

Specifications and bureaucracies live forever! So the next time you are handed a specification and wonder what horse's ass came up with it, you may be exactly right, because the Imperial Roman war chariots were made just wide enough to accommodate the back ends of two war horses. Thus, we have the answer to the original question.

Now a twist ----

There's an interesting extension to the story about the railroad gauges and horses' behinds. When we see a Space Shuttle sitting on its launch pad, there are two big booster rockets attached to the sides of the main fuel tank. These are solid rocket boosters, or SRBs. The SRBs are made by Thiokol at their factory in Utah. The engineers who designed the SRBs might have preferred to make them a bit fatter, but the SRBs had to be shipped by train from the factory to the launch site. The railroad line from the factory had to run through a tunnel in the mountains. The SRBs had to fit through that tunnel. The tunnel is slightly wider than the railroad track, and the railroad track is about as wide as two horses' behinds! So, the major design feature of what is arguably the world's most advanced transportation system was determined over two thousand years ago by the width of a Horse's Ass!

From Robert Briechle

A little bit of "Home" , so far away!

Here are five photos of New Zealand Government Railways JA-class 4-8-2 #1211 which is in service on excursions all over the country under auspices of Mainline Steam Trust. The station photos were taken in Wellington (the capitol) and, indeed, over the top of the locomotive in one photo, one can see The Beehive, the building that houses the New Zealand government. The styling of this class (this loco built by North British Loco Works, others in the J-class in NZGR shops) was patterned after the New Haven I-5 4-6-4's.



Photo credit Anthony Gruerio

News Years day - Southern Railroad Co. of New Jersey
Former Maine Central Caboose at Winslow New Jersey

This Months Gift Shop Special

Wear our signature Sono Switch Tower Cap
The same worn by our volunteers at the Tower.

Tower Cap: 9.00
Tower Mug: 5.00

Shipping \$4.00 each or buy both and pay only
\$4.00 shipping for both.



Make check payable to: Western CT Chapter NRHS Inc
77 Washington Ave.
Norwalk, CT 06854

Ship to: Name: _____
Address: _____

_____ Caps @ 9.00 each = _____

_____ Mugs @ 5.00 each = _____ (Connecticut residence add .30 sales tax for each mug)

Shipping = _____

Total = _____



Railroading and rail history are great parts of America's history, but safety must always play a part when you are near the tracks. That's why the NRHS is a full and official supporter of the **Operation Lifesaver** (OLI) Program. Operation Lifesaver is a non-profit organization that promotes grade crossing safety and railroad trespassing concerns.

Near the tracks, be safe & stay alive! Some important facts:

- An approaching train is closer and moving faster than you think.
- You should never go around the gates or flashing lights at a railroad crossing.
- A train traveling at 55 miles per hour will take a mile or more to stop after emergency brakes are applied.
- A train is at least three feet wider than the rails on each side.
- Railroad tracks and the areas around them are private property, and that walking or playing there is illegal. . .and potentially deadly.
- You should expect a train on any track, at any time, from any direction.
- Even if a railroad crossing does not have flashing lights or gates, you still need to stop, listen, and look both ways before you cross the tracks.
- If a train is sitting still or moving slowly, there could be another train that you can't see or hear moving on an adjacent track!

When near the rails, think safety! Always expect a train!

Mystery Photo.



While this is only a fraction of it's former self, this **NP** trestle was featured in a very dramatic scene in a 70's movie filmed in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Can you identify the movie and the scene?

Get your response to Rick Mount (rick@localnet.com or 203-226-2743

Those who with the correct identification will be announced in the February Manifest.

The SoNo Switch Tower Museum December Volunteer Hours

	John Garofalo	20 Hrs.	Bob Gambling	20 Hrs.
	Buck Neulinger	10 Hrs.	Janet Neulinger	10 Hrs.
T	ony White	10 Hrs.	Roberta Ballard	10 Hrs.
	Jim Mescher	5 Hrs.	Dick Carpenter	3 Hrs.

The Tower opened for 2 weekends in December for the Holidays.

Thank you for volunteering!

The Sono Switch Tower Museum will re-open on Saturday April 30, 2005.

Up Coming Events

**Big 2005 Railroad Hobby Show: Amherst Railway Society – www.amherstrail.org
Saturday January 29, 2005 - 9 AM to 5 PM & Sunday January 30, 2005 10 AM to 5 PM.**

Eastern States Exposition Grounds 1305 Memorial Ave. West Springfield, MA

Better Living Center – Young Building – Stroh Building

Daily Admission Adults: \$8.00 Children under 12 \$1.00 Parking \$5.00

Nearly 5 ½ acres of Railroading

Look for us in the Young Building!

Annual Spring Train Meet

Presented by The Westchester Model Railroad Club

Sunday, March 20, 2005 - 10:00 am - 3:00 pm

Greenwich Civic Center Old, Greenwich, CT

Admission: Adults \$6.00 Senior: \$4.00 Family: \$8.00

Senior & Spouse: \$6.00 - Under 12 free with adult

Plan to volunteer at the Sono Switch Tower table or be sure to visit us.



The Western Connecticut Chapter, NRHS Inc. supports Operation Lifesaver

**Our Next Chapter meeting will be
Monday, January 24, 2005 - 8:00 P.M. at:
At The United Congregational Church
275 Richards Ave. Norwalk, CT**



Entertainment this month will be provided by:

Bob Gambling

Bob Gambling will provide refreshments.
