

TOWPATH TRACKS

March, 2024

Newsletter of the Whitewater Valley Railroad
Connersville, Indiana USA



2024 Operating Schedule

The schedule of trains for 2024 has been finalized. There is a special event this year: the Solarliner runs a round trip from Connersville to Metamora, and a Lunar Local runs in Metamora. These trains are scheduled to take advantage of the crowds expected for the solar eclipse in April. The Solarliner runs on Monday April 8th, and the Lunar Local runs all weekend including Monday. Metamora (Franklin County) is expecting a huge influx of visitors for the event.

The first train this year is the Easter Bunny Express on March 30th. The regular season begins on Friday May 3rd and runs through the end



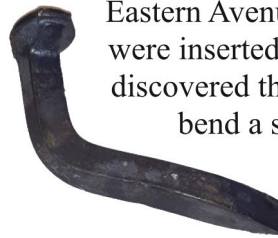
of October. During that time, in addition to the Valley Flyer and Metamora Local, we'll operate these popular special trains:

- Wild West
- Civil War Special
- Train to Dinner
- Throttle Time
- Canal Days Limited
- Ghost Train
- Pumpkinliner

Our year concludes, as usual, with Polar Express running from November 15th through December 21st. The Santa Clause Limited will run on Saturday November 30th.

Track Maintenance Update

In the last issue we wrote about track work that was taking place between South 1st St. and Eastern Avenue. All the replacement ties were inserted and spiked. The crew discovered that the spike inserter can bend a spike to a 90 degree angle if things aren't lined up correctly. Only a few wound up that way. New ballast was dumped using our hi-rail dump truck. The truck is filled at Irving Materials just south of Connersville and driven on the track to the work



site. The tailgate is chained so that it only opens partially when the bed is raised. Then, as the truck is driven forward the ballast is dumped on the track. It takes a bit of coordination between the speed of the truck, the tilt of the bed, and the opening in the tailgate to get the proper flow of ballast. A larger railroad would accomplish this with specially built ballast cars that dump using GPS controls. We are not likely to adopt that technology. Before the track was tamped for the final time, the ballast needed to be moved from the center of the track and placed alongside each

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rail since this is where the tamper forks will force it down under the ties to support the track. Our track crew built a device to accomplish this and took it for its maiden run on this section of track. Once they've had time to make any adjustments necessary, we'll take a closer look at this purpose-built device.

While that was going on, the tamper was working its way south. The intent is to tamp up the ties that are low all the way to Metamora. This will help prevent those areas from getting worse and provide a better ride which will be better for our passengers and equipment. More extensive work, like the section north of Eastern Avenue, will be completed as time permits. Given the amount of track that we have, this type of extensive rehabilitation will not be completed this year. However, 2024 will see much more maintenance activity than we have been able to perform in recent years. Over time this will enhance the overall quality of our track. However, there is by no means an "end" to track maintenance. Inspections will be ongoing as well as performing spot repairs in areas identified

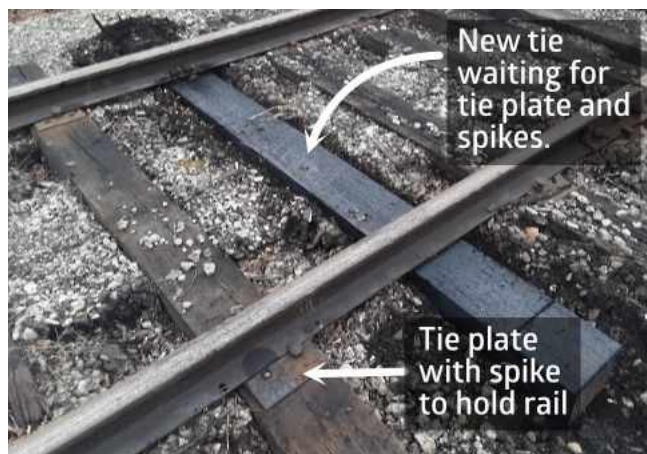


While all of this was going on, the track crew found the time to journey to Rushville, IN, to pick up a donated switch frog which was part of some long abandoned ex Nickel Plate track.

during an inspection. Our railroad contains approximately 54,000 cross ties so we will always have a budget for replacing them. In past years we have replaced 1,000 ties each year. This is beneficial, but not a high enough number to stay ahead of the deterioration rate. We intend to increase the number and replace as many ties as we can, and keep up that accelerated rate for the next few years.



The ties to be removed have been marked, the spikes have been pulled. New ties are staged alongside the track. The tie inserter then pulls an old tie out and then pushes the new tie into place, and then moves on to the next tie.



After the tie inserter is done, then the tie plates are put in place and spiked. The final steps are dumping ballast, spreading the ballast, and tamping which completes the project.

Training Class

The last session of the training class will be March 16th, followed by the graduation trip to Metamora on March 23rd. There are 20 participants in this year's class. Some take the class as a way to learn about and experience railroading. Others have an interest in becoming crew members. Once our operating season begins, those graduates will begin their student brakeman trips. Upon successful completion, they will be promoted to brakeman.

Our training puts quite a bit of emphasis on operating and safety rules. In addition they learn

about both whistle and hand signals that are used to communicate. Each day they spent the afternoon outside practicing these skills by directing equipment movement.

There were also classes on steam and diesel locomotive operation, and each student had the opportunity to operate one of our diesels in the yard. These classes are a part of our educational outreach, and an important source of future operating crew volunteers.



Although we do use radios, hand signals are an important part of our operation. Here the student is giving the engineer the "easy" signal prompting the engineer to be ready to stop before coupling up to the car.



After the coupling has been made, the student signals the engineer to "stretch" which means pull on the car to ensure that the couplers have locked.



Once that has been completed, the brakeman couples up the air hoses between the cars. For safety purposes the brakeman signals that he/she is going in between the cars so the engineer knows not to move the train.



After all the students have had a chance to practice, they meet as a group to discuss the activities. If this were an actual train, the brakemen would load the safety equipment, hang the markers on the last car, and perform an initial terminal air test. Upon completing that, the train would be ready to depart.

Shop Update



The tool sorting has finally ended! The tool boxes are now in the center of the shop with the contents labeled on each drawer. We also

removed all the small hand tools from the existing cart in the center of the shop and placed them in the tool boxes. That older cart will now contain large tools such as wrenches over one inch, 3/4" drive sockets, large pry bars and pipe wrenches.



One old and one new filter in place.

As part of our annual inspection process, the air filters in the engine room doors on 532 were changed. In the past we have purchased filter medium cut to fit the individual filters. The steel filter frame has a screen that is hinged and can be moved out of the way to change the filter. This time we got newer filters which look much like furnace filters. They are several inches thick and 20 by 20 inches.

To install these, we had to remove the steel filter frames, all 20 of them, and replace them with the new filters. In one case there was rust damage to the filter holder so we welded on a new piece of steel.

Inspection work has been completed on 532. The traction motors under the locomotive were inspected and some brushes were replaced. The oil in the traction motor journals was topped off. The main and auxiliary generators were inspected. Based on the condition of the main generator brushes, we will probably have to

replace many of them next year. Unfortunately, there is no easy access to get to the lower brushes. Finally, the compressor was inspected and the air filters were cleaned.

The loose engine mounting bolts have been replaced on 9339 and this eliminated a lot of the vibration when the engine was running. Work was completed on the electrical system. All the interlock contacts were cleaned in the electrical cabinet. These are small contacts which set up various circuits that then activate larger electrical contactors. The engine was taken for a test drive and it seems to be making electrical transition correctly. This allows it, in effect, to "shift" into second gear. This means that the engine will be able to maintain train speed without working the diesel engine as hard. A complete inspection was completed and no problems were discovered.

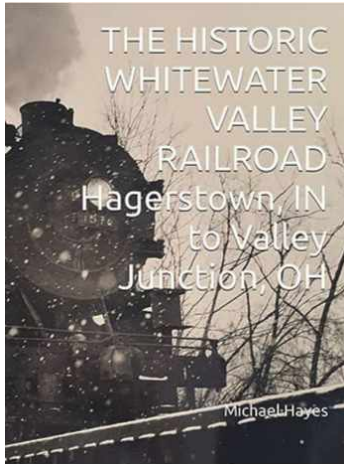
Engine 709 developed a rather strange problem which would activate the electric fuel shutoff valve. At first it seemed as if it was somehow related to the switch for the rear light, but then later in the day the gremlin disappeared. After much electrical trouble shooting, the problem could not be located.

While the locomotive work was going on, two pieces of track equipment visited the shop. The tie inserter came in for some electrical work and a battery replacement. It seems that some not so friendly critters decided to build a nest in the electrical cabinet and also chew off the wiring insulation. The nest was removed and the damage was repaired. The tamper was brought in to replace one of the motors that generates the vibration to help move the ballast into place. It had failed while working, and a fairly large electrical arc came out of the motor. Replacement parts were obtained and the tamper is back working again.

We also took load of scrap to Integrity Metals which is just a few blocks north of the shop. We transported the scrap bin with our forklift and earned \$55.

The Historic Whitewater Valley Railroad Book Released

Member Michael Hayes has released a book he wrote about our railroad. According to him, "The purpose of the book is to bring together all the possible information on this railroad not already in print up to the operation of the tourist



railroad operation. Two books are already in print relating to the tourist railroad and I do not seek to duplicate any information in those books. It is also a tribute to the Whitewater Valley railroaders of the past and present.

Information for this book was drawn from thousands of newspaper articles, pictures not in the previous books, maps, audits, personal testimonies, ICC valuation maps, engineering notes, employee, and public timetables, etc."

The hardbound book contains 257 pages and is available for purchase at Grand Central Station. You can purchase one in person, or phone in a credit card order (765-825-2054). The price is \$49.95 plus tax and shipping if applicable.

If you have not yet paid your dues for 2024...please do so.



Mail a check for \$30 to:
P. O. Box 406
Connersville, IN 47331



For credit card payment,
phone our office:
765-825-2054

Lifetime membership is available (\$200), please phone the office. You must be a paid member to vote in BOD elections, crew trains or work on track.

Connersville Hydraulic Company Continued

Last month we published an article about a lawsuit involving the Connersville Hydraulic Company which was settled in 1930. Many years prior to that, the Hydraulic Company had been supplying water to Connersville, and this story details that arrangement.

In 1869 the Connersville council entered into a contract with the Holly Manufacturing Company, of Lockport, New York, for the erection of a waterworks for the city, which was intended to furnish a more efficient and reliable fire protection. The waterworks plant was completed in 1870, at a cost of forty-seven thousand dollars. The original system had two Holly rotary pumps with additional steam and water-driven pumps built by the local firm P. H. & E. M Roots Company (editor's note: the Roots Blower Company is still located in Connersville).

The plant was situated about one mile from the center of the city, built on ground bought from Wanee & Martin for five hundred dollars. The machinery of the waterworks produced a pressure of from forty to sixty pounds in the water mains, which was sufficient for all purposes except in case of fire; in that case, the power was immediately increased to give a pressure of seventy-five to one hundred pounds.

The plant was in operation for forty years and was enlarged from year to year to meet the growing needs of the city. For several years the city paid the Hydraulic Company one thousand eight hundred dollars a year for the water which it furnished; the water for both public and private consumption was taken from the canal.

For some years there was continual agitation on the part of some of the citizens for a purer water supply. When the canal was cleaned out, particularly around election times, dead animals were occasionally found in it. These occurrences were sufficient to arouse the public to the need of

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providing water from another source. In 1910 affairs came to a climax on the waterworks situation: the desire of the Hydraulic Company for more rent was the last straw on the camel's back. The result of years of agitation and discussion was a decision on the part of the city to build a new plant.

The new plant was finally erected at Eighth and Fayette Streets, although the cost considerably exceeded the original estimate of thirty thousand dollars. This amount was found insufficient to complete the plant. By the time the plant was complete the city had expended about ninety thousand dollars. The water is derived from wells sunk in the immediate vicinity of the plant and thus the city always has the assurance of a plentiful supply of clear water.

Information for this article came from: 1917 History of Fayette County, Indiana Her People, Industries and Institutions, by Frederick Irving Barrows

Wanted: Membership Chairman

We have an opening for a Membership Chairman. This position is responsible for:

- ✓ Maintaining the membership database.
- ✓ Sending out dues reminders.
- ✓ Tracking who has paid either annual or lifetime dues.

If you are interested in this position, please phone the office: 765-825-2054



Meeting Schedule

Board of Directors *(second Friday)*

Friday April 12th @ 7:00 pm

Friday May 10th @ 7:00 pm

Member Meetings *(fourth Friday)*

Friday April 26th @ 7:00 pm

Friday May 24th @ 7:00 pm

Meetings are held at 300 S. Eastern Ave.
Corner of Eastern Ave. and Route 121

Merit Badge Weekend

This year we will be hosting boy scouts mainly from the Whitewater Trails district in Cincinnati. On Saturday April 27th the scouts will visit 14 stations to gain the knowledge they need to earn the merit badge.

Then, on Sunday, they'll purchase a ticket at Grand Central Station for a round trip to Metamora to complete the requirements. Members will receive an email with details on how to volunteer for this event. This will be a busy weekend and an important educational opportunity.

For more detailed information you can visit this website:

scouting.org/merit-badges/railroading-2/

Towpath Tracks is published by the:

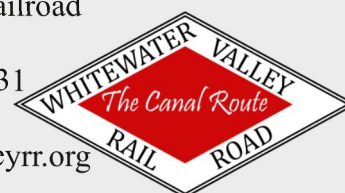
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The Whitewater Valley Railroad is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit operating railroad museum dedicated to preserving an historic branch line railroad, the restoration of railroad equipment, and the conduct of educational railroad programs.

Dues: \$30 annually, or \$200 lifetime