

TOWPATH TRACKS

Newsletter of the Whitewater Valley Railroad
Connersville, Indiana USA

December 2025



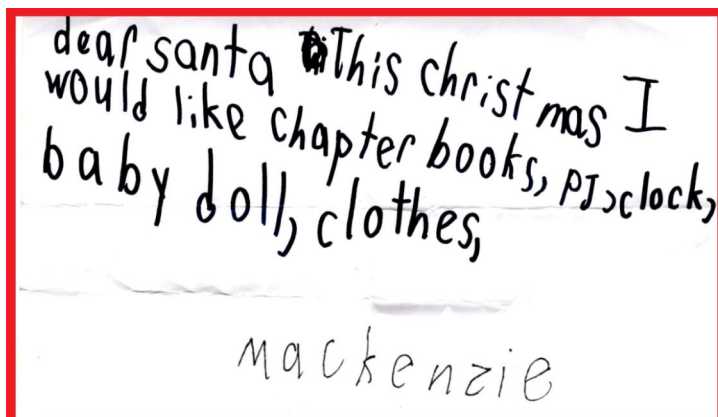
The 2025 Polar Express takes its last trip on Saturday, December 20th. Except for some early runs, the trains have been full of adults and children eager to arrive at the North Pole to pick up Santa before he begins his annual overnight trip. We have been running these trips for nearly 20 years and this year we signed a five-year contract to continue operations. Warner Brothers owns the rights to Polar Express and the contract to use the brand is managed by Rail Events. One of their representatives rode one of our early trips and only had one suggestion. When the train pulls into the North Pole, Santa should be outside waving instead of in the castle.

Then, Santa walks to the train, climbs aboard and spends time with each family during the return trip to Connersville. He hands out a souvenir bell, poses for photos, and receives gift

Brakeman Kevin Reynolds was in shirt sleeves at the North Pole to hook up 709 to pull the train back to Connersville



Passengers boarding at Grand Central. Just two weeks later the weather was much colder.



requests, some of which are in writing to avoid any misunderstanding.

We had unseasonably warm weather the first two weekends which made the trips easier for our crews. However, the weather turned, and during Thanksgiving weekend we had snow and colder temperatures. The following weekend a steam pipe broke under coach 10. A section of pipe was removed and replaced with new pipe and fittings. This work was completed in time for an on-time train departure.

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As if that wasn't enough, the boiler in the steam heat car decided it did not want to produce steam at full capacity. The problem was diagnosed as a faulty water pump that feeds water into the boiler. The pump was replaced during the week with a spare unit and that solved the problem, just in time for weekend five.

Then, for weekend five, mother nature decided to lower the temperature and add a winter storm. The Connersville area received five inches of snow between noon and 8 p.m. on Saturday. This conveniently coincided with our operating hours. However, the trains ran on time.

By Saturday night the temperature was at zero. The crew started early Sunday morning to get heat on the train, one car at a time, to get things warmed up. All was going well until the main steam pipe broke on coach 7. Since this car was the first one in the train, that cut off steam to the entire train. It was decided that repairs could be made so the car was cut out of the train and moved into the shop. Once inside, the broken pipe was removed, a new one put in place, and welded to the main steam line. The car was back outside and on the train in time for an on-time departure.



This was truly a team effort by the operating crew, maintenance volunteers, and others who were on hand to help as needed. Unfortunately, a complete list of names was not recorded.



SNOW TRAIN
The first train on Saturday is approaching Alpine, enroute to the North Pole



Crossover Plate

NOON ON SUNDAY
It's noon on Sunday. Repair work on the steam line under coach 7 is almost completed. The sun and sky look beautiful, but the temperature is zero and not expected to rise much during the day.



This year we installed crossover plates between the coaches. This provides a much safer way to cross between cars. The system is designed to accommodate the changing distance between coaches as the coupling slack changes and also the change in angle as the cars round a curve.

Food for Thought

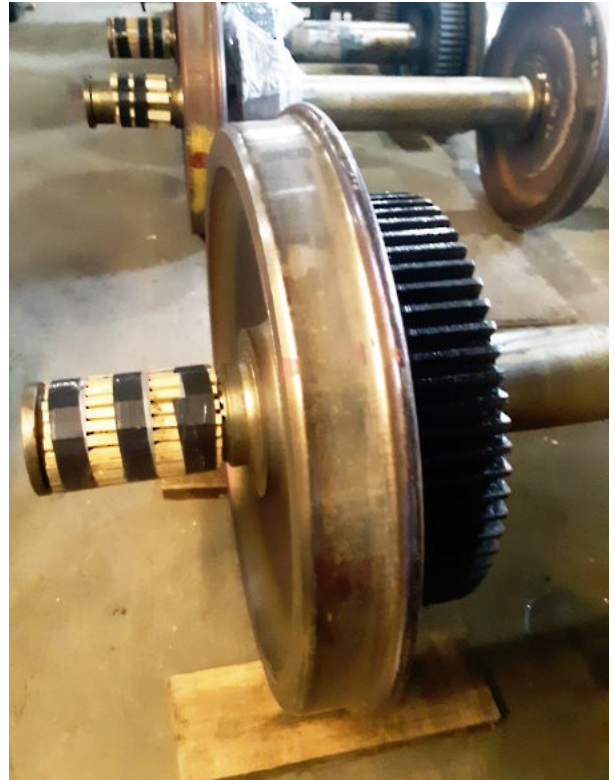
In the last issue there was a discussion about what it takes to feed our volunteers in between the two runs each day. There was a photo of superintendent Travis Weller manning the grill. However, what wasn't stated was the fact that the bulk of the planning, shopping, and production has been completed by three people: Beth Schwering, Katie Rogers, and Hannah Hughes. Some recent meals included: Hot Dogs and Burgers, Macaroni and Cheese & Chicken Nuggets, Sloppy Joe Tatertot Casserole, and Walking Tacos. Thanks to all three for a very special "meals on rail wheels."



MEALS ON RAIL WHEELS

Hannah is busy putting the finishing touches on dessert for one of the meals.

Wheels for Lima 25



The wheels for 25 have returned from the wheel shop. Six wheels were replaced, and the other two were turned in a lathe to return them to the correct profile. In the photo you can see one of the drive gears that mesh with the pinion on the traction motor. The wooden pieces on the end of the axle are used to protect the journal area which contacts the journal bearing.

The next step will be to install the traction motors and then place those assemblies in the trucks. There is a lot of work left to do, but 25 will be back in service for the 2026 season.



Track Work

In early November, when the weather was mild, more work was completed on the switch that will allow us to lay track curving to the left and into the lean-to beside the shop. The track straight ahead will become storage for track maintenance equipment. Work is halted right now because of the weather, but completing this is on next year's project agenda.

Get Involved

Here's your opportunity to participate in a hands-on training course to become a train crew member at the Whitewater Valley Railroad. The classes are scheduled for six consecutive Saturdays, starting on February 21, 2026, and concluding on March 28, 2026. Each session runs from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM.

Students who successfully complete the course and pass the required safety and rules tests will be eligible

Tell A Friend

This opportunity is open to anyone who has an interest in historical railroading. Please pass this information along.

to begin train service as a student brakemen. The training includes both classroom instruction and hands-on outdoor activities using full-size railroad equipment.

The course fee is \$50 per student, which includes all materials and a one-year railroad membership. Participants must be 18 years or older and capable of understanding and following instructions. Classes are conducted at the railroad's South Connersville Shop and Yard, located at 300 S Eastern Ave in Connersville. Please dress appropriately for the weather, as outdoor activities will take place rain or shine.

For more information, email us at trainingclass@whitewatervalleyrr.org or call us at (765) 825-2054.

Not interested in train service? We will be happy to discuss other volunteer opportunities at the Whitewater Valley Railroad that may suit your interests and skills.

volunteer@whitewatervalleyrr.org
(765) 825-2054



We have an endowment fund at the Fayette Community Foundation in Connersville. Each year, based on investment income, a payout is available. In recent years we have reinvested the payout money. A healthy endowment fund provides future financial security.

Contributing to our endowment fund is an excellent way to protect the railroad's financial future. For more information use this contact:

Fayette Community Foundation
765-827-9966
givetofcf.com
Whitewater Valley Railroad Heritage Fund

Meeting Schedule

Board of Directors *(second Friday)*

Friday, January 9th @ 7:00 p.m.

Friday, February 13th @ 7:00 p.m.

Member Meetings *(fourth Friday)*

Friday, January 23rd @ 7:00 p.m.

Friday, February 27th @ 7:00 p.m.

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

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Submit post ideas to:
whitewatervalleyrailroadsocial@gmail.com



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

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.